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Philip, Robert

The love of the Spirit





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THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT,

TRACED IN

HIS WORK.

A COMPANION TO THE "EXPERIMENTAL  
GUIDES."

BY ROBERT PHILIP,

OF MABERLY CHAPEL.

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"Why do those who speak much of the love of God and of Christ, say so little about the love of the SPIRIT?"—*Dr. Henderson.*

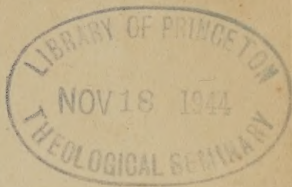
"He comes to us with the love, and upon the condescension, of all the blessed TRINITY."—*Dr. Owen.*

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1836.



WILLIAM TYLER,  
PRINTER,  
BOLT-COURT, FLEET-STREET.

TO  
THE REVEREND DR. HENDERSON,  
THEOLOGICAL PROFESSOR OF HIGHBURY COLLEGE,

THIS  
*Humble Attempt*

TO  
RESTORE AN OLD TRUTH TO ITS PROPER PLACE  
IN THE CHURCHES,

IS  
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY HIS FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.





## INTRODUCTION.

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It is a singular fact, that we have no Treatise on the Love of the Spirit. The British pulpit and press have covered themselves with glory, by their exhibitions of the wonders of Redeeming Love, as these characterize the good will of the Father, and the mediatorial work of Christ; and by unrivalled demonstrations of the personality and agency of the Holy Spirit: but no writer, that I know of, (and I have searched diligently,) has traced the wonders of the Spirit's love, in Redemption. OWEN has certainly done much to endear the Spirit to believers, in his brief Treatise on "Fellowship with the Holy Ghost," at the close of his masterly work on "Communion with God." The Spirit

is, however, the gift of God and Christ to the world, as well as to the church. His mission embraces both the world and the church, just as the love of God and the death of Christ embrace them. John xvi. 8. Accordingly, quite as much is said in Scripture, to commend Him to the confidence of both, as to demonstrate their absolute and universal need of his Holy influences. But how many overlook this fact! In general, the unconverted and the undecided, turn their need of the Spirit, into apologies for delay. They think of His grace as power, rather than as love; and thus imagine that they may safely wait for it. Many of the penitent also, although penetrated with a sense of their need of the Spirit, are yet very doubtful whether He will work all that in them, which they feel to be necessary for them. They are afraid to calculate upon the exercise of His power, in their own case. And not a few, even of those who can hardly doubt, that he will carry on the good work he has begun in them, are evidently more influenced in their hopes, by his power, and

faithfulness, than by his delight in his work, or his love to the subjects of it. They are not so much at *home*,—when they speak of the love of the Spirit to their souls, as when they speak of the love of God or of the Lamb. They dwell with solicitude and solemnity, upon their need of the grace of the Spirit ; but not with rapture, or complacency, on the richness, freeness, and glory of his grace. They do not exactly question its fulness, its freeness, or its tenderness ; but neither do they rejoice in them, as in the tender love of the Father, or the intense love of the Son. The Father's promise of the Spirit, or the Son's gift of the Spirit, rather than the grace or the glory of the Spirit *himself*, is most relied on, and rejoiced in by believers in general. They rather plead the promises of His help, than lean directly upon his own good will and great power for help. Their confidence and complacency are thus less in Himself, than in the Covenant which pledges his influences ; although his place in that covenant was his own choice from eternity, and has been his chief delight

ever since he entered upon its duties, and will be the "rest" of his love until the end of time !

I have seen and felt so much of this, and found so little to counteract it, in our theology, that I was compelled, for my own sake, to trace out, step by step, the love of the Spirit in the work of the Spirit. How far I have succeeded in restoring this old truth to its original place, is not for me to say. My object was gained when it took its proper place in my own mind and ministry ; and, therefore, my Conversational Essays on the [subject, are addressed, not at all to Theologians, as such, but entirely to private Christians ; and thus they have no critical or theological pretensions whatever. Indeed, they are merely experimental hints, brought home to the bosom and business of those who, like myself, cannot forget, that unless we have "the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his." We thus require to see the love of the Spirit, in order to see how we can obtain and retain the Spirit himself, as proof of our personal interest in Christ. The hold we need upon the power and



grace of the Comforter, we can only get, by getting hold of his love ; for until we see how He loves our souls, we cannot see how he can abide with them, either as a consoler or as a sanctifier.

It has, therefore, been my sole aim to engage the attention and win the confidence of all who apply to themselves the question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" I have tried to seat myself at their side, and to enter into their difficulties, and to whisper in their ear ; that thus they may judge for themselves, whilst interchanging experience with a "brother and companion," in the spiritual tribulation arising from the fear of "not having the Spirit." And if I have ever been enabled to help the perplexed or the doubting, I would fain hope that this Companion to my Experimental Guides, will increase that help, as well as confirm it.

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THE  
LOVE OF THE SPIRIT.

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No. I.

THE LOVE OF THE TRINITY COMPARED.

It is by comparing the revealed perfections and works of the Father, Son, and Spirit, that we arrive at the sublime conclusion, that these Three are One ; the same in substance ; equal in power and glory. The mystery of this fact is not at all increased, nor is the sublimity of it lessened at all, by the circumstance, that less is said concerning the divinity of the Spirit, than concerning that of the Father and the Son. This can only surprise those who forget or overlook the fact, that the Saviour expressly guarded his disciples against expecting much information from the Spirit, concerning the nature of the Spirit. “ When He is



come, he shall not speak of himself." John xvi. 13. "He shall testify of Me." John xv. 26. "He shall glorify Me." John xvi. 14. After these assurances from the lips of Christ, it is unreasonable to expect so many declarations of the divinity of the Spirit of God, as of the divinity of the Son of God. Besides, it is not the *number* of texts, which proves a point of this kind, but their explicitness. One explicit declaration of the godhead of the Spirit, is just as conclusive as a thousand, when Scripture is concerned. It is not, indeed, so satisfactory to the eye, nor so imposing to the ear in controversy, as a host of passages; but as all the validity and value of a host of proofs, depends on their individual truth, one ought to be as decisive as any number: for if we cannot depend on the truth of one, many cannot give us certainty.

I readily grant that, in a matter of such infinite importance as the divinity of any being, who claims our supreme homage and confidence, we have a right to know his title before we yield to his claims. Although, therefore, I have maintained the sufficiency and satisfactoriness of even one text of revelation on this subject, I quite feel that it is natural, and not unreasonable, to expect, that such a truth as the godhead of the

Holy Spirit, would be frequently introduced in Scripture. And it is so. His personality and divine agency are not only implied in all the revealed accounts of creation, providence, and redemption, but are also often (some hundred times) and unequivocally expressed. In fact, as much is *revealed* concerning his divinity, as concerning the divinity of Christ, although less is *said*.

This is not a distinction without a difference, nor without a cause. Repeating a truth is not adding to its sum or certainty, however it may enhance its importance to us. The divinity of Christ is true, not because it is often repeated; but it is often repeated because the first mention of it was true; and because it is a truth of supreme importance; and because, in His case, human appearances had to be counterbalanced and counteracted by divine declarations. He took upon him "the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man:" and, therefore, according to the depth of that humiliation, had to be the height of the proof of His equality with God; and according to the number of his privations and woes, had to be the number of distinct attestations to his original riches and glory. But in the case of the Holy Spirit, His advent involved

nothing which veiled his glory, or contrasted with his godhead, or seemed to contradict his claims; and, therefore, as no counterbalance was wanted, none was given. Enough was said to declare Him to be the Eternal Spirit; and, in order to prove the supreme importance of this truth, His divine agency runs through the whole fabric of divine truth, and is so interwoven with the entire Scriptures, that it cannot be separated from them without tearing them to pieces.

I would not have touched this subject at all, had I not felt it necessary to justify my attempt at a comparison between the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit, in redemption; for it is quite unnecessary to multiply books upon the divinity of the Holy Spirit. "What can the man do who cometh after (Owen) the king," except to simplify or condense? My simpler object is, to compare the Love of the Trinity, just as others have compared the natural perfections of the Father, Son, and Spirit; in order that their equality in love may be as familiar as the unity of their essence. And there is need of this argument: for, although no Trinitarian would hesitate for a moment to say, that the Spirit, as well as the Father, "is love;" nor to add, that the persons of the Godhead must be as much one in heart as in glory; yet, no

writer, that I know of, dwells with complacency, or appeals with triumph, or argues with power, on the love of the Spirit. Christ does so. The apostles do so. And Owen evidently saw and felt the capabilities and claims of the subject. In general, however, theologians do not. They content themselves with taking it for granted; and thus leave the fact in an abstract or indefinite form, which neither touches the heart, nor tells upon the character of plain Christians. Indeed, many of the serious "suffer loss," through this inadvertency. They are somewhat afraid of the Spirit. I mean, they do not see that His heart is as warm, and His hand as willing, to do His work in redemption, as the heart and hand of the Father and the Son were to do their part. They have thus less confidence in the Spirit, and less love to him, than towards God and the Lamb. They do not, however, give less attention to him. Happily that is prevented: our theology, both from the pulpit and the press, being rich, beyond comparison, in glorious exhibitions of the necessity, the fulness, and the freeness of the grace of the Holy Spirit. Both the lesser and the greater stars of evangelism are all culminating in the grand scriptural point, that the influences of the Spirit are just as *free* as they are neces-

sary, and as accessible as they are indispensable. This is as it should be. And nothing is wanted in order to complete this "demonstration of the Spirit," but to enshrine and crown it with the wonders of his love. That, I am quite unequal even to attempt; because my own mind can only deal with an *individual* mind, and not with a general subject, in religion. I never could theologize nor generalize at all, apart from trying to carry a practical or experimental point, with a supposed person, to whom I write, just what I should say in conversation. I am, however, on this occasion, more than usually reconciled to this weakness or defect of my own mind; because my conversational hints upon the love of the Spirit, will in no wise forestall the subject; but may, perhaps, create a taste for it in the circle of my "GUIDES" and "CLOSET LIBRARY;" and thus help, at least, to call forth some "Master of Israel," to complete our theology, on the doctrine of "The Comforter." Why does not the author of "*The Official Glory of the Son of God*," bring out that of the Spirit?

Having thus stated how the subject stands at present, I proceed in my own way. Did you ever notice the emphatic brevity of apostolic language, when divine love is the subject? "God is love," says John. "The love of Christ passeth



knowledge," says Paul. With the same sublime brevity, Paul says, "I beseech you by the love of the Spirit." Thus in all the three instances, we are evidently thrown upon a fact, which words cannot express, and which needs no epithets to commend it. Accordingly, it is always illustrated by other facts, and not by descriptive words. Thus, when John says, "God is love," he immediately adds, "In this was the love of God manifested towards us, because God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John iii. 8. Here facts are every thing, and phraseology is nothing but the bare statement of them. Thus also Paul writes, when illustrating the love of Christ, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. ii. 20. "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," says John, to the seven Churches in Asia. Rev. i. 5. Even in heaven, the language of eternity, either does not supply descriptive words to saints or angels, or they prefer facts, in celebrating the love of Christ; for there are no epithets in the New Song: "Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Rev. v. 9.

Now exactly in this way, or by facts, and not by descriptions, is the love of the Spirit illustrated in Scripture. When Paul pleaded with the Romans by "the love of the Spirit," he had just before reminded them, that "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us" in prayer; that the Spirit "led" the children of God, "dwelt in" them, and "witnessed" with their spirit to their adoption. Rom. viii. In like manner, when the Saviour commended the Spirit to the confidence of the Church, as "another Comforter," it was not by eulogizing or explaining his love, but by stating what he would *do* when he came: the Comforter shall lead you into all truth; shall bring all things to your remembrance; shall abide with you for ever.

Thus, it is not from words, but from his *works*, that the love of the Spirit should be estimated, when it is brought into comparison with the love of the Father, or the love of the Son: nor is it any valid objection against the equality of their love to the world and the Church, that there is no suffering, nor any humiliation, in the whole history of the Spirit's love. This is equally true of the Father's love. That too involved no suffering nor privation: but no one doubts, on this account, the reality, the greatness, or the

strength of the love of God. No one suspects it of being at all less than the love of Christ, because Paul does not say of it, as of Christ's, that it "passeth knowledge." The absence, therefore, of this epithet in his appeal to the love of the Spirit, implies no inferiority in that love. In a word, its measure is to be found in what the Spirit *does*, just as the measure of the Father's love is to be found in what he *gave*, and the measure of the Son's love, in what he *endured*.

Let us then contemplate the love of the Father. It is amazing! But for it, there would have been no Redeemer, no Sanctifier; and, therefore, no salvation on earth, just as there is none in hell. The love of God is, therefore, the real and original fountain from which all the streams of mercy and grace flow to us, in a river of the water of life. That river could flow, however, only upon channels of "everlasting righteousness," or in full consistency with law and justice; and nothing but the atonement of Christ could be such an honourable medium. Divine love could become redeeming love, only by a sacrifice which magnified the law, and glorified the divine character. The love of God is not, therefore, irrespective of the work of Christ. It both required and provided an atonement, to legiti-

mate and charter the reign of grace in the divine government. And all this the death of Christ did.

Law and justice were not, however, all that had to be satisfied and glorified in the highest, before divine love could become *redeeming* love, honourably and consistently. HOLINESS, also, had to be satisfied, and magnified, and glorified in the highest; and that could only be done by making the redeemed holy, or the pardoned perfect.

Here there was room—occasion—necessity, for the love of the Spirit. The saved had to be sanctified on earth, and perfected for heaven: and what but love—infinite love—could have led the Holy Spirit to undertake the sanctification of the Church, which Christ purchased with his own blood? This He did undertake; and he will so consummate its perfection, that divine Holiness shall be as much satisfied and glorified with the eventual purity of the redeemed, as Justice is with their escape, or Law with their acquittal. If, therefore, the love of God passeth knowledge, in pitying our misery as sinners, and in bringing all his sympathies to bear honourably and effectually upon our salvation, is not the love of the Spirit, in pitying both our weakness and depravity, and

in bringing all his grace and strength to bear upon our meetness for heaven, love that passeth knowledge in its warmth and wonders? Where is the difference, between the love which *fits* sinners for heaven, and the love which *opened* heaven, by the blood of the Lamb? Both are infinite!

Let us now contemplate the love of Christ. If the comparison fail at all, it will fail here. It shall not succeed, however, by any forcing or stratagem on my part. It will fail unnecessarily, however, if you determine to think only of the *sufferings* of Christ; for as there was no *penal* test of the love of the Spirit, there can, of course, be no comparison on this point. Christ stands alone, in all the glory of suffering and dying love! The Father's love endured nothing penal or painful, for the world or the Church. That it would, however, have done so, had any paternal suffering been either proper or necessary, we can hardly doubt. Well; why not judge in this way of the love of the Spirit also? There was no more occasion for Him to suffer at all, in proof of his love, than for the Father to do so in proof of his love. Doing any thing unnecessary, is not a demonstration of love. Doing what is *wanted most* is the demonstration of that: and nothing of suffering was

wanted, in order to atone, when the sacrifice of Christ was finished. His love left no room in Gethsemane, or on Calvary, for the love of the Father or of the Spirit to redeem by *price*; because He left no drop in the cup of wrath, shrunk from no stroke of the sword of justice, and refused no demand of the Law. So far, therefore, the love of the Father, and the love of the Spirit, stand in the same light and relation to Redemption by price.

You are prepared to go a step farther towards a comparison, now that you see how the facts stand. The real question is now,—what was *wanted*, after Christ finished his atoning work? There was His sacrifice—perfect, all-sufficient, and glorious! Nothing could be added to its merits, or its efficacy, or its acceptableness, before God, as a ransom for souls. But still, around that sacrifice, when it was “finished,” stood a world, yea, a Church which knew neither its merits nor its meaning; and which never could have understood them, had not the Spirit explained them; and never would have employed them, had not He applied them. Thus, although the fountain for sin and uncleanness was opened by the death of Christ, there were none to wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, until the love of the Spirit

enlightened and led them. But for His love, therefore, the love of Christ would have remained unappreciated and unknown, both to the world and the Church. But for what the Spirit did, all that Christ endured would have had no saving effect upon man on earth, although its instantaneous effect in Heaven, was the confirmation of all the angels in their holiness, and the ratification of all the saints in their happiness, and the complacent “rest of God” in his love. O, surely, if God is love because he so loved the world as to give his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, the Spirit must be love also, in the same sense, and to the same degree ; seeing He gave all the light which revealed that “unspeakable gift,” and all the will and power by which any and every sinner applies to the Saviour. The Son is thus as much the free and unspeakable gift of the Spirit to *individuals*, as he was the gift of God to the world.

It is desirable on this subject, that our thoughts and feelings should run occasionally in the same channel, and at the same rate they do, when we realize to ourselves vividly what must have been the condition of the world, had not Christ undertaken its cause. In that case, the world would either have been another hell, or the gate of “the place prepared for the devil and his angels ;” con-



science would have had no peace, and hope no anchor; life no charms, and death no antidote: for man could not have been even what heathen man is, either in condition or character, had there not been a Mediator between God and man from the very moment of the fall. No; even the heathen are not a specimen of what the world would have been "without Christ:" for, bad and abominable as Idolatry is, it has some moral laws, and proclaims some hopes, however vague or fallacious; whereas, there would have been nothing but "a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation" every where on earth, as every where in hell, had not Christ interfered on our behalf. This fact, in common with many others, renders the love of Christ unspeakable.

Well; just ask yourself, what would the world have been without the work of the Holy Spirit? I will not allow myself to answer this question, by supposing the worst. Say, if you will, that we should have gone all the length in morals and hope, which they reach who resist the Spirit. It certainly would have been something, to have even a form of godliness, and a ceremonial of worship, and a theory of Christianity. These, without the Spirit, are useful. Christianity, however nominal, exalts the character of nations; and however



corrupted, is still the most powerful check upon immorality. But what is civilization or morality, were they even universal, whilst the heart is unchanged, and heaven not desired, and God not loved, and the Saviour not prized? All this—would have been the case, every where and all along, had not the Spirit loved the world, and sanctified the Church!

These hints do not, I am aware, call up a horrid scene before the imagination: it is, however, an appalling scene to a sober mind. Only think!—had all churches in all ages been churches only in name; all Ministers mere functionaries for hire; all Christians mere formalists; then, all hope would have been delusion: all faith presumption; all death damnation! This has not been the case. But why? No church would ever have become spiritual, by its own power or choice. No man could have become wise unto salvation, by unaided efforts, however arduous. No sufferer could have extracted solid comfort from the promises, by mere pondering. What do we not owe to the love of the Spirit! But for that, the thief saved on Calvary would have been the *only* trophy of the Cross of Christ. Yes; Paradise might have been barred at once and for ever, when he entered: for, without the Spirit,

no man, afterwards, could either have gloried in the Cross, or understood it. O, if we love Christ, the love of the Spirit to us, should be an inspiring theme ! It is, remember, a part of the greatness of the great mystery of godliness, that Christ was "justified by the Spirit." Yes ; had not the Spirit justified the claims of the Saviour, by clearing up the glory of his person and work ; and endeared Him, by applying his sacrifice and grace, even His disciples could not have done so, and we should not have attempted it. I have been chiefly influenced and regulated in these hints, by the *stress* which the Saviour himself laid upon the work of the Holy Spirit. He had, evidently, as much reference to it, in dying for us, as the Father had to Him in pardoning.

Consider this fact. You say, and justly, that but for the love of Christ in dying for us, the paternal love of God could not have saved us, consistently with all the perfections of the divine character and government. Now, this is no *reflection* upon the love of God. It is, in fact, the very glory of his love, that it thus required to be in full and everlasting harmony with all righteousness. Well ; in this perfect harmony with eternal rectitude, the love of Christ placed the love of God : and just so, did the love of the Spirit place

the love of Christ. For, it is the very glory of the Saviour's redeeming love; that it depended as much on the sanctifying love of the Spirit, as the paternal love of God did on the blood of the Lamb. Without the work of the Son as a Mediator, the Father could not have honourably become *our* father; and without the work of the Spirit as a sanctifier, the Son could not have honourably become our Mediator. Christ himself, therefore, looked as much to what the love of the Spirit would do for us, as God looks to what Christ has done for us. Thus, as our redemption by price required the death of Christ, so our redemption by power required the agency of the Spirit.

These remarks are, I am aware, but general, if not somewhat vague. They are purposely very general; because the love of the Spirit is traced, in this little volume, throughout all the work of the Spirit, from its beginning as the good work of grace, on to its consummation in glory. I conclude this Essay, therefore, by reminding you that the love of the Trinity, although not brought into competition, is so far brought into comparison in Scripture, that the name of Father, Son, and Spirit, is equally connected with baptism, and equally associated in the benediction upon the churches; and in Heaven, the Spirit

appears as "seven spirits before the throne," that we may know and acknowledge the all-perfect Godhead of his nature, and the all-sufficient power and freeness of his grace. Rev. i.

Who can read the following passage from Dr. Owen, without regretting that his purpose was "to number rather than to unfold" the actings of the Spirit? "The principle or fountain of all his actings for our consolation, is his own great love and infinite condescension. He willingly proceedeth, or comes forth from, the Father, to be our comforter. He knew what we were, and what we could do, and what would be our dealings with him. He knew we would grieve him, provoke him, quench his motions, defile his dwelling-place; and yet he would come to be our comforter!

"Want of a due consideration of this great love of the Holy Ghost weakens all the principles of our obedience. We lose both the power and pleasure of our obedience for want of this consideration. Let the soul lay due weight on it: 'The Holy Ghost, in his infinite love and kindness towards me, hath condescended to be my comforter. He doth it willingly, freely, powerfully! What have I received from him? In the multitude of my perplexities, how hath he refreshed

my soul! Can I live one day without his consolations? And shall I grieve him by negligence, sin, or folly? Shall not his love constrain me to walk before him in all well pleasing?"—*Owen on Communion with God, 3rd Part.*

## No. II.

### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT IN CONVERSION.

“THE work of Christ, and the work of the Spirit,” says Dr. Wardlaw, “are mutually necessary to each other’s efficacy, and are thus both *alike* indispensable to the salvation of the sinner. Without the work of Christ, the Spirit would want the *means* or the instrument of his operation; and without the work of the Spirit these means would remain inefficacious and fruitless. Without the work of Christ, there would not have been, for any sinner, a foundation of hope towards God; without the work of the Spirit, no sinner would have been induced to build upon this foundation. Christ has opened the way of access to God;—the Spirit brings sinners to God in the way which Christ has opened.”

This bringing of sinners to God, by “the new and living way” opened by Christ, is CONVERSION. None are brought nigh unto God, nor turned from the error of their ways, by the power of the

Holy Spirit, but those who are led “in the way everlasting;” or, as Paul expresses the transition from the broad to the narrow way, “made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Without this, there may be departures from sin, and approaches to righteousness, in some things, and for a short time; but, without this there is no saving conversion. The *heart*, until affected by the cross, does not follow the feet, however fast or far they may run in the path of general duty, by the impulse of ordinary motives.

You have, no doubt, observed and felt this. Perhaps you can recollect instances in your own history, when you made considerable improvements in your conduct, and resolved to make still greater; but neither with good-will. It was compulsion, not choice; fear, and not love, which produced these reformatations. Had they even been greater, therefore, and all lasting, they were destitute of the very first principle of true religion, good-will. Forced or slavish obedience is not service rendered to God, but a tax paid to the conscience to moderate its uneasiness.

What a mercy it is, that the gospel contains and presents motives which can win the heart as effectually as the law can work upon the conscience! Were not this the case, we should never yield to



God any cheerful or willing obedience, and thus never please or be pleased : for, as it is impossible to please God at all “ without faith ” in Christ, so it is impossible to find pleasure long in works without faith.

Well ; if you are thankful that Christ is “ the way ” to the Father, you ought to be equally thankful that the Holy Spirit is the guide *to* and *in* that way. Did you ever pause to consider how much love the Spirit displays in thus leading sinners to God by Christ ? It is worthy of your special notice and gratitude. It will not divert nor divide your attention from the love of God in giving his Son, nor from the love of Christ in giving himself, for us. It will increase your love to God and to the Lamb, to trace the love of the Spirit as that shines in the conversion of sinners.

Now, there is no conversion *from* sin until there be conviction *of* sin : and there is no conviction of sin, which tends to Christ or to holiness, but that which the Holy Spirit implants in the soul. Thus, there is great love even in the *severest* part and form of the work of the Spirit.

We forget this, or overlook it, whilst conscience is either as unquenchable fire, or as a gnawing worm, within us. Such convictions seem, then, to be sent in judicial anger, not in *judicious* love.

It is, however, in love, that they are sent : witness the design of them at Pentecost. Had not Peter's audience been cut to the heart, they would not have cried out for mercy, much less have looked to Christ for it. Natural conviction, however strong, never looks to the cross ; nor, when very strong, ventures to hope or pray for mercy. It is *supernatural* whenever it tries to relieve itself at the feet of the Saviour. It is sent in love, whenever it sends us to the gospel to search for hope, or to the mercy-seat to seek for hope, or to the cross to wait for hope. Conviction is then the Spirit wounding, that he may heal ; casting down, that he may lift up again. It is evidently his work even when there is only a desire for salvation ; and although the way of salvation be almost unknown at first. Accordingly, both Peter and Paul recognised, in that trembling inquiry, "What shall we do ?" the quickening power of the Spirit. Neither the Jews at Pentecost, nor the jailer at Philippi, knew what to do when they were awakened to a sense of their guilt and danger. The same fire that inflamed their conscience did not enlighten their understanding equally at the same time. It only revealed danger, and originated the desire to escape, in the first instance ; and did not shed guiding light nor cheering warmth upon any

mind, until the apostles proceeded to unfold "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel."

Here, if any where, we may learn to distinguish between natural conscience, and supernatural conviction. The latter (as might be expected) is not reckless nor desperate, even when most overwhelming. The sinner quickened by the Spirit, may see no way of escape at first; but he desires one, and is looking and inquiring for one. He may have no hope for a time; but he wishes to hope. Like Jeremiah's penitent, he is willing to put "his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope." In a word, his sufferings do not irritate his spirit against God. The agony of his conscience does not harden his heart. There may be a passing thought, or a momentary feeling of a dark and desperate character; but neither is indulged or welcomed. Both are dreaded and hated.

This is not the case with mere conscience, when it breaks loose upon a sinner. It can sear as it suffers, just as some sores *mortify* as they spread; or it can madden against God and man, until the opinion of both is despised, and the power of both defied. Such reckless remorse ought not to be ascribed to the strivings of the Holy Spirit. It is not, indeed, natural no

common for even a very guilty conscience, to make a man a terror to himself, or to those around him. Indeed, this occurs so seldom, that it has been the chief cause of confounding natural and supernatural conviction. It is so very rare, to find even a very wicked man trembling or despairing; and so common to see many as wicked as he is, yet quite fearless, that Christians have been tempted by the anomaly, to ascribe all awakenings of conscience to the work of the Spirit.

This may be well meant; but it is ill judged. All the conviction wrought by the Holy Spirit, is intended to "glorify" Christ, by rendering his precious blood, precious in the sinner's estimation: and, therefore, all hardening horrors, and all terror which has no tendency towards the cross or the mercy-seat, should either be left altogether unexplained, or referred to any thing but the agency of the Holy Ghost; for he can have nothing to do with the production of alarm, which either steels the heart against God, or drives the soul away from the Saviour. It is "the sorrow of the world," and not "godly sorrow," that worketh death and despair, in every instance, where there is no insanity: and whenever there is reason to suspect insanity, (of which vice is not the cause,)

there is no reason for putting a harsh construction even upon despair itself.

These distinctions ought not to be lost sight of: and yet, they ought not to be hastily applied. The first aspect of an awakened conscience, however awful, should not be treated as mere remorse. The Spirit, as in the case of the jailer, may have much to do with convictions, which, at first, are altogether terrific, and almost desperate. He had, of course, nothing to do with the rashness of the jailer; but He evidently had much to do with the "trembling," which followed it. Whilst the jailer drew his sword to kill himself, the Holy Spirit was certainly not convincing him of sin: but when "he called for a light, and sprang in trembling" and inquiring, Paul treated him as a man quickened by divine power. However, therefore, an awakening may open, or express itself, for a time, it ought to be met promptly, fully, and even kindly, by the glad tidings of a free salvation; and never reckoned mere remorse, until it has defeated all the means of grace.

If these hints throw any light upon the way in which we should judge and act in the case of others, they throw still more light upon our own convictions, of the evil and danger of sin. These are more than natural, yea, more than providen-

tial, if they have either endeared the Saviour to us, or led us to pray fervently for an interest in His atonement and intercession. Convictions which lead to this, are the leadings of the Spirit; and all in love, however painful they may be. Had the "hold" which the angel took of Lot, left its *marks* upon Lot, he certainly would not have thought it too hard, when he saw the fire burst on Sodom, and found himself safe in Zoar. It was the grasp of an angel's hand; firm, because friendly; and unrelaxing, because resolved to save. Well, therefore, may we trace to the love of the Spirit, any and every conviction, which drew our attention to the love of Christ. Well may we sing, however we have smarted,

"Eternal Spirit, we confess,  
And sing the wonders of thy grace."

Another signal proof of the love of the Spirit in conversion, is, that He convinces chiefly of the sin of UNBELIEF. Remember the Saviour's own account of this characteristic feature of the work of the Spirit; "When he is come, he shall reprove the world of sin: of sin, because they believe not in me." This being the point on which the Holy Spirit chiefly plies the conscience, the Saviour does not hesitate to call

him "the Comforter," even whilst he is only convincing of sin. Conviction, like affliction, is, indeed, any thing but comfort in itself; it "is not joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby." Thus, although not comfort, it is preparation for it, and the only way to it.

This is not, however, the most striking fact of the case. There is love—love, wonderful in its tenderness and strength, in thus making unbelief the point at which His sword pierces deepest and oftenest. We could not bear its "piercing, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow," in the case of any other sin. No human mind could sustain a full discovery of the entire evil of sin, either as it affects the whole character and government of God, or as it entails misery on others. Nothing but the two-fold immortality of soul and body conjoined, could endure to see how one sin can perpetuate itself along all the line of a man's posterity, unto the very end of time; and run its consequences, even in a visible stream, through the bottomless pit for ever! I doubt very much, if there be one man or woman on earth, who could bear to see the influence of even their folly, upon



all who witnessed their example, whilst they were unconverted. Yes; put vicious example out of the question entirely for a moment; our mere indecision and formality, for years, told upon every one around us, who were on the outlook for excuses, with hardening effect; and they are now hardening those around them; and thus originating a line of ruin which shall never stop.

The CONVINCEE of sin sees this; but he does not show it. In mercy he conceals it, and singles out the sin of unbelief for the fullest exposure, because that is the only hinderance to the pardon of all other sins, and because the conscience itself has no natural tendency to take alarm at mere unbelief.

The love manifested in this is unspeakable. We both require, and can bear, to see a great deal of the sinfulness of neglecting the Saviour; for, although no discovery of the evil of sin is more humbling, or so melting, no discovery brings with it so much to balance itself. A clear sight of unbelief comes from a still clearer sight of the glory and grace of Christ; and thus the disease and the remedy are seen together at the same time. The light that reveals the baseness and ingratitude of unbelief, comes pouring down from the face of Jesus upon the face of the sinner; and although

it almost blinds him for a little, as it did Saul of Tarsus, it also enables him to cry, "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?"

You will enter into the spirit of this hint, when you pause to notice the point at which real conviction settles down into habitual penitence. It may begin at our besetting sin, and run like fire from crime to crime, through all the catalogue of our transgressions, until the conscience is in flames. But this, although it burns fiercest, is not what abides longest, nor what humbles most. It is the calm, solemn, weighty consideration, that all sin was against grace as well as law; which, like the small still voice at Horeb, wraps the face in the mantle of humility, and lays the spirit in the dust before God. The agonizing sense of individual sins subsides before the hope of pardon; but we never can forgive or forget our long neglect of the great salvation! Nothing shames or shocks us so deeply and lastingly, as the recollection of having lived without Christ in the world. We see our hearts laid bare in that guilt and folly. We cannot palliate or soften our disregard of the Saviour.

Thus the abiding conviction, by which abiding humility is produced in the soul, is, what Christ said,—“of sin, because of unbelief.”

My fellow Penitent! we cannot tell nor conceive how much suffering the Spirit of grace has saved us from, by making us feel chiefly the exceeding sinfulness of unbelief. Had he shed and kept as much light upon any other sin, our spirits would sink for ever under it. Perhaps we must be far down in eternity, before we are capable of bearing a full sight of all sin!

If you understand these hints as I intend them, they will suggest to you a very satisfactory reason why conviction is so calm and gentle in the case of many converts. Do you not see at a glance, that the Spirit's point (which is to glorify Christ) is gained, when unbelief gives way? There is, then, no occasion to set "on fire the whole course of nature." Its pride and self-righteousness are demolished when Christ becomes precious to the soul.

Were this duly considered, you would not be afraid lest your convictions, if they have been gradual and gentle, be not the work of the Holy Spirit. He does not work for the sake of working; but in order to bring the soul to the Saviour as its only refuge, and as its supreme example: and therefore, if you have given your heart to Christ, you have as little occasion to doubt your own conversion as to question Lydia's, whose heart the Lord opened without tempest or terror.

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On the other hand, if your convictions were deep and distracting, that only shows how deep and stubborn your unbelief was. The Spirit shot no more arrows into your conscience than just the number necessary to subdue your aversion or indifference to the Saviour. He wounded only in order to heal; and, therefore, only deep enough to make the cure certain. It was all *bad* blood you lost, however much you bled under his operations.

What do you think now of the love of the Spirit in conversion—in your own conversion? Are you not ashamed, as well as astonished, that you should never have traced nor marked his love thus minutely before? If so, do follow out the manifestation of it by reviewing still more closely his dealings with yourself. You are only on the threshold of his love yet, even as conversion shows it: your own conversion can furnish more lamps to illuminate it.

Consider; what but love could have induced the Holy Spirit to strive with you at all? There was nothing about your heart to attract his hand. He might have justly passed you by: he might have left you for ever when you resisted his first strivings. Oh, were not the Spirit love, equally with God and the Lamb, he would never

have tried to make a holy temple of your heart or mine !

Again ; what but love gave power enough to your convictions, to render them strong enough to send you fully to the Cross of Christ for relief ? There are terrors and stings of conscience which drive some, like Judas, away from Christ, and on to destruction : yours have brought you to your right mind, and set you down where a sinner never yet perished,—at the foot of the Cross, and under the shadow of the Mercy-seat.

Do speak well of the Holy Spirit to those of your friends who have not yet asked for him. Some of them may be afraid of him. So little is said of his love by many who say much of his power, and the need of it, that not a few are discouraged. Do speak a word in season to those who are thus weary and heavy laden. It will increase your own love to the Spirit, and the Spirit's love to you, to commend him as love to others.

### No. III.

#### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT IN JUSTIFICATION.

To justify a sinner is more than pardoning his sins, much as that is : it is also to accept and treat him as righteous, or as if the righteousness of Christ were his own personal virtue.

This is a wonderful plan of saving the guilty ! Well may it be called, “ the manifold wisdom of God.” How sublime, and yet how simple, is this plan ! Paul felt all this, when he said of God, “ For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we (who knew nothing but sin) might be made the righteousness of God in him.” As if the apostle had said,—For the sake of sinners, God treated his own Son as if he had been *guilty* ; and now, for the sake of Christ, he treats sinners, when they believe, as if they were *innocent* ; not imputing unto them their trespasses, but giving them the full advantage of the righteousness of Christ, just as if it were their own property. “ BEHOLD what manner of love the Father

hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God."

It will not divert you from admiring the love of the Father or of the Son in justification, to behold also the love of the Holy Spirit in it. His love, too, reigns conspicuously in that great act of grace, although not exactly in the same way. He does not, indeed, pass the *act* of justification: "It is God that justifieth." Nor does he furnish any *part* of the righteousness, for the sake of which we are treated as righteous: it was Christ that died and rose again "for our justification." But still the Spirit does something, whatever it be, which so connects both his hand and heart with the reign of justifying grace, that the apostles do not hesitate to identify him with the Father and the Son in this transaction. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God:" to the Galatians, "We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." The Saviour himself said of the Spirit, "He shall convince the world of righteousness." Observe, also, how prominent the place is which Paul gives to the work of the Spirit, when explaining to Titus the process by which believers are justified by grace, in order that they may be heirs of glory: "Not by works



of righteousness which we have done ; but according to his mercy, God saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost ; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Why ? " That, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Tit. iii. 4—7. In like manner, Peter connects " the sanctification of the Spirit" with the " sprinkling of the blood of Christ," which is the meritorious cause of justification. 1 Pet. i. 2.

Thus, it is not without the warrant of precept or of example, that I invite you to trace the love of the Spirit in justification. The apostles never overlooked or forgot it ; nor can any believer be unaffected by it when he studies it. It may not strike you at a glance, but it will amply repay fixed attention.

Now, it is no part of the *official* work of the Father or of the Son, to convince sinners of their need of a justifying righteousness. The Son has brought in an everlasting righteousness by his mediation, and the Father has set it forth by his authority ; but neither officially apply it to the soul, nor stir up the soul to apply for it : that is left to the love of the Spirit to do ; and the love which does that cannot be weak or wavering. It

is a task which nothing but real love would undertake, and which nothing but great love could accomplish ; for we are not soon nor easily convinced of our need of either an imputed or a personal righteousness : both are against the grain of our nature. Indeed, except a man's character be very bad, it is not easy to convince him of the necessity of being better. Many speak as if they actually dreaded, as well as disliked, to be very righteous ; thus deeming it not only unnecessary, but in some way dangerous, or discreditable, to be so. No wonder, therefore, that a justifying righteousness should be far from their thoughts, seeing a personal one is thus lightly valued, and even laughed at, when it is zealous of good works.

This is the bent of human nature : I cannot, therefore, but trace much of both the love and power of the Spirit even in convincing us of the necessity of being more righteous than the average of our neighbours. This is not a natural conviction, nor a conventional maxim : it is a divine persuasion wherever it is a deep feeling. It is a transition, not, indeed, into "marvellous light," but still out of that gross darkness which covers the people (and they are many) who are satisfied with not being worse than others.

I would not attach undue importance to even a

deep conviction of the necessity of being better than others ; but I must say, that it is a *march* (and not a *dead* march either) gained upon mere conscience, and thus a good sign. The man who is led thus far in judging for himself how good he ought to be, is, to say the least, in the fair way to discover his need of a better righteousness than his own. Indeed, this discovery is usually made by trying to be good. That effort is either so unsuccessful, or its success, in a few small things, is accompanied with such failures in great things, and with such a sight of the many things which must be added, that the reforming man becomes afraid, and begins to doubt whether his own power is able to carry out his own purposes.

It is often at this point that the need of a perfect righteousness begins to be felt. The sinner, with all his trying, cannot make his own *robe* broad enough nor long enough to cover him. Place it and stretch it as he may, it leaves some part naked ; and the more it is drawn upon one point, the more naked others are made. He may not yet think it a "filthy" rag, but he cannot help feeling that it is only a "rag," both in its dimensions and strength ; for it tears when it is stretched, and falls off when let alone. This is not more quaintly expressed than it is literally true. We

try to establish our own righteousness until we weary or despair of it : and then, did not the Spirit of God turn our attention to Christ, we should give up religion altogether, as a hopeless undertaking, in our own case. It is only by seeing something suitable or encouraging in the Saviour that this is prevented. Religion would be abandoned by every man who had tried hard and failed utterly, did not the Spirit step in at the moment of extremity, and show him something of the person and work of Christ. "There may be help for me yet, in Him who is mighty to save," is the candle which Peradventure holds to Hope, and Hope to Resolution, at this crisis.

Our first cheering views of Christ seldom amount to more than this. It is not at once that the Spirit convinces the soul that Christ is "the end of the law for righteousness;" nor is it exactly in the way we expected, even when he does so. He leads us into all truth now, very much in the same manner as he made the apostles and disciples wise unto salvation, step by step, as we can bear the truth. Every Christian both needs and finds a day of Pentecost, to enlarge, mature, and confirm, his knowledge of justification through faith. Perhaps no one ever understood this grand truth of the gospel at once. Even when it is under-

stood, it can hardly be believed for joy ! It seems too good news to be true.

This is, I have no doubt, one reason why it is so gradually opened up to the penitent. They must be *kept* penitent. Their safety must be more consulted than their comfort, at first. Full submission to the righteousness of Christ, as well as counting all things but loss to be found in it, must be produced, before we are prepared to sing meekly or prudently, "Thou hast covered me with the robes of righteousness and the garments of salvation." No lips ever sung this well, until they had often sighed in the dust of self-abasement, and breathed in fervent prayer, the cry, "Unclean, unclean ! God be merciful unto me a sinner."

The Spirit is, however, convincing of righteousness, when he convinces of sin, because of unbelief : for then, our felt need of pardon, and our felt unworthiness of the pardon we need, equally tends to draw and fix our attention upon the question—how can a Just and Holy God pardon me ? We are not far from being convinced of righteousness, when we are convinced that God, for Christ's sake, can pardon us, without dishonouring His law, or His character. More seals than one or two, of the book of righteousness are

opened to us by the Spirit, if we see clearly that God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly, when they believe in Jesus. Any one can say thus : but he who can see its truth in his own case, whilst looking at all his own ungodliness, sees “ afar off,” and has had the eyes of his understanding enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

Can you see “ this great sight,” after looking at all the greatness of your guilt and unworthiness ? Does your eye turn to it, and repose upon it, even with hope, after having read the catalogue of your sins from top to bottom, and seen all the plagues of your heart, and all the weakness of your character ? Is this your Goshen of light, when all around you is Egyptian darkness ? If so, you may well admire the love of the Spirit, and warrantably believe that He has convinced you of righteousness, in no small or superficial degree.

But, perhaps, your conviction of it does not go all this length yet. You may rather be looking at your own need of a justifying righteousness, than at the sufficiency or freeness of the righteousness of Christ. Well ; even in that case, the love of the Spirit towards you, is no doubtful matter. For, who opened and salved thine eyes to see the

need of "*white raiment*," to clothe thy naked soul? The time was,—when you did not see that you were naked, or poor, or wretched. You once took for granted, that you had only to try, in order to be as good as the best; or, at least, as good as could be expected in your case. You expected to look well, and to feel very warm too, in the robe you were manufacturing for yourself. And now, you are as much ashamed of your righteousness, as of your unrighteousness; and more afraid of being judged by your good works, than the natural man is of being judged by his evil works.

This is no accident. It is a conviction which even your utter failure, when trying to establish your own righteousness, did not, and could not produce. He is convinced by the Spirit, who is convinced that he himself can do nothing towards his own justification. He is "taught of God," who sees and feels that God must justify him, entirely and freely, if he ever be justified at all. This is not untrue nor doubtful, even if the convicted sinner has but a very slender hope, at first, of being clothed with the righteousness of Christ. His deep sense of his need of that "spotless robe," and his strong desire to be clothed with it, are both produced by the power of the Holy Ghost.



That power has wrought mightily and graciously in the man, who lies self-condemned and self-emptied at the feet of God, saying nothing but, "Guilty, guilty ; vile, vile ; unworthy, unworthy :—mercy, mercy ! for the sake of Christ !"

The Spirit is not exactly his Comforter then ; but even then, he is as much his friend, and as truly his helper, as when he commanded the angel to "take away the filthy garments" from Joshua, the high priest, and to "clothe him with change of raiment," and to "set a fair mitre upon his head." It is, indeed, other work, to humble and empty the soul : but it is the same mighty hand, guided by the same warm heart, that lays the soul down at the foot of the Rock of Ages, and that lifts it up to the summit, or into the munitions, of that Rock. The weeping penitent, and the rejoicing saint, is equally the "workmanship" of the Holy Spirit. They are stars, differing from each other, in the degree of grace ; but showing equally the glory of the Spirit's love.

You would, of course, prefer such a conviction of righteousness, as would enable you to sing, "He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." This is a very natural, and not at all an improper desire, after having passed through many painful exercises of mind, by turning over and

over the question,—how can I be just with God? It is not wrong, after having thus suffered awhile from the terrors of law, and the sting of conscience, to wish, even very much, to be stablished, strengthened, and settled in the hope of pardon, and acceptance through the Beloved. They have not suffered much yet, from law or conscience, who are not very anxious to “know” that they “have eternal life.”

Let us not forget, however, that hope would never have been so very dear to us, had we not suffered a good deal from the want or from the weakness of it. We should have been farther off from “a good hope through grace,” than we now are, had we not been led so far down into the valley of humiliation. The Spirit has led and kept us there, not for the sake of paining us, nor yet to try our patience merely; but chiefly, that we might be driven out of all refuges of lies, and even out of sight of them all, until we saw nothing between us and perishing, but just the Cross of Christ. For His work, be it for ever remembered, is to “glorify Christ;” and Christ is not fully glorified in us or by us, until he become “all in all,” in our hope and desire: and that, we do not make Him, until we come fully to the point and spirit of the cry, “Lord, save; I perish.”

Have you come to this point and spirit often, and yet never been able to lay hold upon "the hope of Righteousness by faith?" Are you still, after all your renunciations of your own righteousness, and, after all your prayers to be justified freely by grace, quite uncertain whether you have found mercy to pardon? Is it the case that, whilst you can hardly doubt that you have found "grace to help in time of need," you yet doubt very much whether you are "justified by grace?" I can sympathize with you, in this uncertainty and suspense. Let us not, however, question the love of the Spirit, even if he has not yet been our Comforter in this matter. There may be love in His delay. There is love in delaying comfort, on the question of Justification, if the kind of comfort we have been seeking is not promised, or if the promised comfort is looked for from a wrong quarter. The comfortable hope of our justification, can only come from the same source, that our conviction of the need of a justifying righteousness came from. Now that conviction came from the Word of God. The Holy Spirit fastened our attention upon the revealed fact, "that, by the deeds of the Law, no flesh living can be justified;" and thus upon the experimental fact, that all our own righteousness is as filthy rags. Thus

it was *truth*,—that He plied our understanding and conscience with, in convincing us of our need of justification by grace. He made our belief of this, stand on the Word of God. He showed us our guilt, and danger, and weakness, as we had never seen them before: but still, only as they are depicted in the Bible. He did not reveal to us a Law, not written there; nor a Curse, not threatened there; nor a want, not declared there: He just made us wise *up* to “what is written” of sinners, and against sinners; and led us to apply that to ourselves.

Well; is it not likely, yea, more than probable, that He comforts, just as he convicts, on this subject,—by the Truth? Consider! The facts and promises of the Gospel are as able to comfort, as the demands and threatenings of the Law to alarm. Why then should not the Spirit speak peace to the conscience by the Gospel, as well as terror to the conscience by the Law? The glad tidings of the former, are as true as the sad tidings of the latter. The heart can be healed by cheering truth, as well as broken by awful truth.

Has this, however, been the way in which you, “through the Spirit,” have “waited for the hope of righteousness by faith?” Have you not rather waited for some impulse—emotion—or inward

sense of pardon, apart from the outward, or written promise? Have you not waited *for* the Spirit, rather than *on* the Spirit? Have you “minded the *things* of the Spirit,” (which are chiefly His promises and counsels,) as much as you have minded his sweet influences, which are the dew of them? Have you sown to the Spirit the good seed of hope and holiness, as well as looked for the early and latter rain of His grace, to make it fruitful?

This is close, almost cross, questioning: but it is wanted. For, how *unlike* the Saviour’s own account of the way of bringing home the hope of righteousness to the heart, is the creed—the scheme—(what shall I call it?)—the notion of many, who, in other respects, are as willing as Paul or Peter, to be entire debtors to Christ for justification! Their whole soul is set upon owing every thing, as to the ground of their acceptance, to His Cross; but, as to the knowledge of their acceptance, they seem, somehow, unwilling to be indebted to his WORD for that; or doubt whether his word be warrant enough, for taking up and cherishing a good hope through grace.

Do, look again, to the Saviour’s own account of the process by which the Comforter is promised to convince of righteousness. “He shall convince

of Righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." John xvi. 10. This refers, unquestionably, to the sufficiency, perfection, and freeness of the Righteousness of Christ, to justify all who believe, from all sin. The proof that such a righteousness was needed, lies in the solemn fact, that Christ *came* from the Father, into the world, to magnify the law by his obedience, and to make it honourable by his death : and the proof that His obedience and death did work out a perfect righteousness, lies in the sublime fact, that He was welcomed *back* to the Father by all the armies of heaven, and by the Father,—who was well-pleased for his righteousness' sake ! Now "by this fact," Christ says, "shall the Spirit convince of righteousness ;" or lodge in the mind, such a persuasion of the infinite merits of His work, and of the infinite good-will of the Father, that no new or different revelation of the love of the Father or the Son, can be wanted, (in order to warrant the hope of salvation,) by any one who desires a holy salvation, and is willing to be indebted to Christ for it.

Now, I will not ask, what feeling, impulse, or inward sense, can compare with this outward fact. I durst no more allay your solicitude to feel aright, than I dare refrain from calling upon you to judge

aright. Whoever has no concern to *feel* hope, peace, and comfort, is not much concerned about his guilt or danger. I want you and myself,—and I avow it, and proclaim it, without apology to theological stoics or worldly maxims,—to feel the good hope of pardon and acceptance: I should, however, only perplex or mortify you, were I to call for such feelings, without reminding you that the facts and promises of the gospel, both create and warrant them. By nothing else does the Holy Spirit produce in the heart, love, joy, peace, or any of the peaceful fruits of righteousness. He is too much a Comforter—too concerned for our real comfort—and has too much love to the Saviour's glory and our good,—to make impressions on our minds by mysterious impulses, when He can make them, equally well, by plain and glorious truths, which are always at hand to be read, and always easy to be understood.

Besides; He will “glorify” Christ; and not your faith, nor your feelings. You want to have a very high opinion of your own faith—as living—and saving—and of divine “operation:” and he wants you to have a very high opinion of Christ; without whom, faith would just be as unequal to your justification, as works. And as the Spirit will “not testify of *himself*,” he will



not,—depend on it!—testify of you, (even to yourself,) that there is any thing in the nature or the degree of your faith, which is any cause of, or claim for, your justification : but He will so shut you up to the fulness, and freeness, and sufficiency of Christ to save, that Christ himself, and not your faith, shall have all the glory ; and you, yourself, shall attach no importance to your faith, but just as it thinks of nothing—realizes nothing—rests upon nothing, but the doing and dying of Christ.

I will not, therefore, meditate *for* you, upon the Saviour's reason for the hope of justification. It is before you, as before myself. He returned to the Father, and was welcomed by him, as the grand proof that we may “return, and welcome!” to the Father by him. I, therefore, leave you with the Word and the Spirit before you, to ponder and pray over that oracle—“He that believeth *is* justified :” for the righteousness of God “is *unto* all, and *upon* all, them who believe.” Rom. iii. 22.

## No. IV.

### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT IN RECONCILIATION.

PAUL says, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God:" and it is neither a contradiction nor an exception to this awful truth, that some persons, who make no pretensions to spiritual-mindedness, and others who deny the very being of the Holy Spirit, yet profess a high regard and veneration for God. For, it is not God, as he has revealed himself, whom they admire or love: and, therefore, the more they admire and love the character they ascribe to God, the more they hate his real character.

It is not very easy to see this, when men of genius, science, or taste, pay high compliments to the wisdom, power, and benevolence of the Deity: for the same language, from the lips of a Christian, would be an expression and a proof of his love to God. How, then, is it a proof of enmity against God, when a mere philosopher, poet, or sentimentalist utters it? God is as wise,

as mighty, and as glorious as they say. His eternal power and godhead are to be seen in all the works of creation, which they examine and admire. And they do admire and enjoy what they praise. They are not pretending, when they say, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." How, then, can they be traitors, whilst they utter truth? Why does revelation class them with the haters of God, seeing they love the works of God, and speak well of the divine perfections displayed in these works? Are they not, at least, less averse, and more reverential to God, than those who study neither the Bible nor nature?

Now there certainly is a difference of *form*, between the enmity of the philosopher to God, and that of the sensualist; and between the enmity of the man of taste, and that of the worldling. The latter are "enemies in their minds by wicked works;" and the former, "by vain and evil imaginations:"—a difference, however, amounting to nothing more, so far as God and eternity are concerned, than that which subsisted, in ancient times, between the idols of savage and civilized nations. The polished Greeks and Romans, who worshipped no idols but such as were cut from Parian marble, with statuesque perfection, were

as much idolaters, as the barbarians who bowed down to hideous monsters, and vile reptiles. "The glory of the incorruptible God" was equally changed, whether, as in Athens and Rome, it was "changed into an image made like unto corruptible man;" or, as in Egypt and Babylon, "unto birds, and beasts, and creeping things." The Jupiter of Rome, and the Juggernaut of India; the Apollo of ancient Greece, and the Thor and Woden of ancient Britain, are equal proofs, that the men who invented them, and the men who worshipped them, "did not like to retain God in their knowledge;" but were, in fact, equally haters of God."

So it is still. There is as much real enmity to the revealed character of God, in natural and sentimental religion, as in the grossest superstition. The former despises the Bible, or dispenses with it; and the latter neutralizes or makes it void by the traditions of men. Be not misled nor amazed, therefore, when you read or hear high eulogiums upon the Divine Character, from men who reject Divine Truth. That Truth pays all the homage, they can do, to God as a Creator: and, therefore, they must dislike the homage it pays to Him, as a Lawgiver, and as the God of Salvation. For, they cannot pretend, (at least, they cannot prove,)

that the Bible does less justice to the glories of creation, than philosophy. They have produced no poetry yet, that rivals, in natural beauty or sublimity, the Psalms and Hymns of inspiration. In rejecting the Bible, therefore, their reason cannot be found in the spirit or the style, in which it celebrates the natural perfections of Deity. Indeed, by their own confession, nothing is so lofty in sentiment or language, as sacred poetry.

We thus get at the real cause of their unbelief : it is enmity against the *moral* perfections of God, as these are revealed in the Bible. How inveterate then is the enmity of the human heart, seeing it can admire the Divine goodness in nature, and hate it in grace : trace it in Creation with enthusiasm, and trample on it in Redemption, with contempt : laud it in a star, and laugh at it in the "Sun of Righteousness !"

This is fallen human nature, when it raises itself highest, without the gospel. It merely refines its enmity, and systematizes its pride. No wonder, therefore, if the gospel pour as much scorn upon human wisdom, as upon human crime. Both hate God alike, although for different reasons.

Thus the necessity of Reconciliation to God is universal. And as the best forms of the human

mind are, by nature and tendency, the *proudest*, no wonder that reconciliation is always by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well as by the blood of the Cross. "The Ministry of Reconciliation" succeeds in its *Beseechings*, because it is "the ministration of the Spirit."

It will increase your love to the Spirit, to trace the love of the Spirit, in reconciling you to God, by the Cross. Now, by it, he has reconciled you to the incomprehensible *mysteries* of the Divine Essence. You do not cavil with them, nor turn them into excuses for neglecting the Divine will. This is done, however, by many. They entrench themselves amongst the mysteries of the Trinity, when they are plied with the claims of the gospel; and demand explanations of the twofold nature of Christ, when they are blamed for unbelief. They wield all the "things hard to be understood," against both "the one thing needful," and the things which belong to their eternal peace; and because they cannot comprehend, refuse to obey.

Mystery is not, indeed, the sole, nor the real reason of their aversion to the gospel. That lies deeper than they choose to acknowledge. It is no calumny to say so: for there is nothing in the Trinity of the Godhead, merely as trinity, to provoke or offend, however, it may baffle. The

mind does not, indeed, like to be baffled: but then, it does not escape from this mortification, by taking up with the absolute unity of God. The incomprehensible prevails in that, to a degree which, if as much dwelt upon, would be equally baffling. What offends, therefore, is not the mystery of the Trinity, as mere mystery; but the redemption involved in the fact. Accordingly, the Unitarian always discards redemption from his theory of the Divine nature and government. He rids himself of more than mystery by rejecting the Trinity. He throws off, along with that, the fear of perishing, the need of a mediator, and the use of a sanctifier.

Why have you not done so? You do not comprehend the Trinity you believe: but it does not offend you. You can both say and sing,

“I love the incarnate mystery!”

Why? Because there—you can put your “trust.” It is the *trust-worthiness* of the Lamb of God, which reconciles you to the Trinity of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit has thus shown you the need of a salvation, which no theory of Unitarianism furnishes; and satisfied you that Trinitarianism alone, provides for the wants of your soul.

This is from the love of the Spirit! Had he not convinced you of sin, and of righteousness,



and of judgment, you too might have rejected the gospel, under the pretence of its mysteriousness. Many are left to do so : and, who can wonder ? They will not take the *word* of the Spirit, upon the subject of their sin or danger ; and, therefore, he will not *work* for their conversion. They will not take truth just as he has written it ; and he will not do that for them, which they can do for themselves.

Observe, now, how the Holy Spirit has reconciled you, by the Cross, to the *sovereignty* of the Divine will. Nothing, perhaps, is more appalling or repulsive to the natural mind, than the idea of being entirely and eternally at the disposal of the mere will of God ! The heart rises and writhes at such absolute dependence. It would shake it off, if it could. To have no claim to be saved, and no vote or voice, but the voice of begging prayer, in the matter of our own salvation, is a galling chain to the spirit of man. Nothing but the power of the Spirit of God could reconcile any man to this chain. But that power does reconcile to it ! When we are convinced of the evil of sin, we are soon convinced that God is not necessarily bound to pardon it, and that he would not be unjust, even if he refused to pardon it. This is both felt and confessed, whenever the evil of sin

is thoroughly brought home to the conscience. Then, our difficulty is, to see how God can do any thing else than allow the law to take its course against us. We have not only nothing to say for ourselves, in bar of its sentence; but we are even afraid to plead the death of Christ against the curse; because we feel that we deserve condemnation, quite as much for our sins against Christ, as for our sins against law. And there is no pretence in all this! We do not aggravate our guilt or danger, in order to conciliate God by an excess of humility. We do not take the worst view of our case, in the hope of inducing God to take the best view of it. We are not bribing Mercy, when we declare our utter unworthiness of any mercy. No; whatever homage the self-condemnation of a penitent pays to the majesty of law or justice, is disinterested. It is the honest verdict of conscience, and in nowise a stratagem to evade punishment.

So it is also in the submission of a real Penitent, to the sovereignty of divine grace. His professed submission to the good-will of God, is not a clever nor covert plan of *making* that will *good* in his own case. He knows that he cannot force God to save him—nor bribe God—nor circumvent God, in the matter of salvation. All that he

knows, even when he thinks most, is, that self-condemnation is a becoming spirit on the part of a sinner, and the only spirit at all likely to find mercy. All that he hopes, when he hopes most, at this stage of his experience, is, that his sense of utter unworthiness may be the work of the Holy Spirit, shutting him up to the worthiness of the Lamb slain. Accordingly, he casts himself simply upon the good-will of God. He is reconciled to have no other warrant for hoping in Christ. He may wish for some clue to the divine will—for some sign or token of eventual success : but he lies down at the foot of the Cross without them, leaving the issue in the hands of God.

It is no objection against the simplicity or disinterestedness of this submission to the divine will, that the penitent would not be thus meek, if he thought that the issue would be *against* him. God has not called on him to think so. The Holy Spirit does not work on the heart, to reconcile the heart to condemnation, or to the loss of the soul. He convinces, only in order to save the soul ; and, therefore, it is no part of a Penitent's duty, and no part of a penitential spirit, to be willing to perish. It is a sin, to despair. It cannot, therefore, be a virtue, nor a mark of grace, to be *willing* to be lost.

This is so obvious, that I know not how to explain the conduct of those, who make "willingness to be lost," the test of real humility. True; they qualify the requirement of such humility by adding, "if it would be for the glory of God, that you should perish." I do hope that we misunderstand those who speak thus! They must, surely, mean less than their words imply. The loss of a soul can bring no glory to God. He has "no pleasure in the death of a sinner." Judgment is His strange work: and, therefore, although God will be perfectly just in the condemnation of the impenitent, he will never consider himself glorified by it. Goodness is the Glory of God! Accordingly, when Moses requested to see His glory, He said, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee."

But I will not argue this point; for I cannot believe we understand the *local* meaning of the unscriptural expression I refer to.

Observe now, how the Holy Spirit has reconciled you, by the Cross, to the *exclusiveness* of the divine plan of saving sinners. He has, indeed, taught you nothing upon this subject, but just what is written. What is written is, however, very obnoxious to the natural mind. It is,—that there is no other name given under heaven, whereby

we can be saved, but the name of Jesus. It is,—that other foundation (of hope) can no man lay, than that is laid ; even Christ. Now the utmost that unrenewed nature will cordially allow, is, that this may be *one* way of salvation, and a very good way for those who like it. But, that it is the *only* way of getting to heaven, is denied by more than one half of those who have the Bible in their hands. The popular maxim is, that there are as many ways to heaven, as there are roads to London ; and all equally safe, if the travellers are only sincere.

This is said, indeed, good-humouredly ; but it is a malignant sarcasm upon the character of God, and a bitter reflection upon His word. Accordingly, the good humour with which it is uttered in company, soon gives place to anger or scorn, when the maxim is flatly denied. Then, it comes out, both by words and looks, that a God who would only save in one way is not at all to the taste of the majority. They hate “such strictness !”

I speak of this maxim, not, of course, as it is applied to the forms or discipline of Churches, (but as it is extended to all creeds, and no creed. It is perfectly true, that there are as many ways to heaven as there are Churches,) in

which Christ is made "all in all" in salvation. The difference of their government, does not hinder the Holy Spirit from blessing the preaching of the Cross; and, therefore, it cannot prevent the "crown of glory." But this is not true of all creeds. It is not true of any creed, in which the Cross is not the only refuge of the guilty, and Grace the only principle of piety. It is false, if the Bible be true.

But how popular is this maxim, amongst those who do not think, and amongst those who plume themselves upon thinking freely and liberally! And you and I, have been saved from it by the teaching of the Spirit! We are glad to be "shut up" to Christ, for all our hope. Well we may!

And now observe, how the Holy Spirit has reconciled you, by the Cross, to the revealed *character* of God. The substance of that character is, that "God is love." And yet, strange to say, this is the chief reason, why the natural mind is enmity against God. It hates His love far more than his holiness. And for an obvious reason: the real love of God is paternal; and thus is seen to claim the heart: it is redeeming love; and thus is seen to be humbling: it is sovereign love; and thus is seen to be unmeritable. Were it love that asked for little return of affection, and accepted

of still less obedience, men would, perhaps, be rather pleased with it than otherwise : but claiming, as it does, their supreme love, and their immediate confidence, they hate it because it leaves them without excuse. They can question Authority and cavil at Justice, under the pretence of strictness or severity : but they cannot resist love, but by resenting it as needless or humiliating.

Why else are sublime and lofty ideas of God, so much more popular in the world, than gentle and lovely ideas of his character ? O, it is not from nobility of mind, nor from refinement of taste, that the grand is preferred to the gracious, and the sublime to the tender. The former let the heart alone—let the conscience alone—let their sins alone. The majestic and magnificent play around the head and amuse the imagination : but the fact that God is love, cannot be trifled with, and, therefore, it is hated.

Whilst, therefore, I admire the grace of the Spirit, in reconciling the heart to the strictness of divine Justice, and to the scrutiny of divine Omniscience, and to the glory of divine Holiness, I adore it for reconciling the heart to the fulness of divine Love—because that is so full of claims upon our affections, and confidence, and obedience. It brings



all duty with it, in irresistible forms. It makes all sin appear as ungrateful, as criminal. It places us so, that the bare idea of refusing any part of the divine will, becomes monstrous, as well as base. Accordingly, Paul says, "Hope maketh not ashamed," when "the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost." Then it begets the love which is "the fulfilling of the Law;" and thus leaves us to act on David's principle, "I shall not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy precepts."

And now, observe how the Holy Spirit has reconciled you, by the Cross, to the dispensations of *Providence*. Our reconciliation to God is not complete, even when we are both quite willing and thankful to be entire debtors to Christ and Grace for all our salvation. Indeed, we are not a little inclined to calculate, that surely Providence will not press very hard upon our patience, when our faith is thus cordially given to the Saviour. We lay our account with having some trials in the world, but take for granted that they will not be many nor mysterious. They turn out, however, to be of a kind, or in a degree, we did not expect: and then the Holy Spirit has to begin the work of reconciliation anew. For it is no uncommon thing to be so unhinged by worldly reverses or disap-

pointments, that the very form as well as spirit of piety goes to wreck for a time.

It is all very well, for it is very true, to say that the path of the just, like the light, “shineth more and more, to the perfect day.” Those, however, who think before they speak, and whilst speaking, say this, remembering that the sun is often clouded, and sometimes totally eclipsed. And the clouds of calamity, owing to the weakness of our faith, and from our proneness to walk by sense, can so hide the wisdom of Providence, that we soon lose sight of both the work and worth of grace for a time. It is not, in general, the first heavy pressure of “the mighty hand of God,” which we bear humbly, or interpret fairly. We are but too ready to judge of his heart by his hand; and thus our own hearts rebel or murmur against him, until we seem, even to ourselves, to have no submission to his will.

This is the state of mind which the Spirit has to subdue. We have not only to be reconciled to the crosses we groan under, but also to the Cross of Christ, which permits them, and to the government of God, which appoints them.

How many will join me in wondering and adoring, that the love of the Spirit has reconciled us to privations and sorrows, which, at first,

seemed to harden our hearts against God, and to alienate them from the Saviour, and to make them reckless of eternal consequences? Our troubles would have done all this, had not the Spirit lifted up a standard in the midst of them, which calmed us.

## No. V.

### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT IN ADOPTION.

IT does not at all lessen our admiration of the love of Christ in Redemption, that God “*sent Him forth*” to redeem them who were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons. He was sent forth by the Father; but he also “*came forth*” as willingly as the Father sent him. The fulness of time could scarcely be heard, when saying, “Go,” so promptly, cheerfully, and loudly did he say, “Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God.” Psa. xl.

Well; just in the same way the love of the Spirit, in adoption, is brought before us. He, too, was “sent forth;” not, indeed, to adopt or redeem children to God; but to regenerate all the adopted, and to sanctify all the redeemed family of God. And to do this, the Eternal Spirit came forth, at his pentecostal fulness of time, as promptly and willingly as the Father sent him, or as Christ came at the fulness of His mediatorial time.

Very different, indeed, was the kind of work which the Father gave them to do in the world. The Spirit had not, like the Son, to come forth in the likeness of man, nor in the form of a servant, nor at all in the capacity of a sufferer. No manger, with its privations ; no Gethsemane, with its cup of wrath ; no Calvary, with its cross, awaited his advent. Humiliation, agony, and death, were the tests and trials of the love of Christ alone. Only His heart bled or broke for the redemption of the adopted. “ In bringing many sons to glory ” Christ alone had to be made “ perfect through suffering.”

This creates a distinction all but infinite between the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. It does not, however, create such a wide distinction between their *love* as there is between their *work* ; nor such a marked distinction as to forbid the mention of the love of the Spirit when the love of Christ is celebrated : for, there is no more danger of detracting from, or of hiding, the love of the Saviour, by exhibiting the love of the Spirit, than by exhibiting the love of the Father ; except, indeed, the exhibition be unfair, or disproportionate, or designing.

It must, however, be confessed, and should never be forgotten, that the love of God has been

exalted and exaggerated, by some writers, for the express purpose of hiding all the glorious peculiarities of both the love and work of Christ. Such love is ascribed, by modern Socinians, to the Father, as would, if true, render the atonement unnecessary, and the love of Christ but human. And we have lately seen the *gifts* of the Spirit exalted above the preaching of the Cross, even when nothing beyond "unknown tongues" was pretended to. It is, therefore, possible to have a sinister purpose in emblazoning the love of the Spirit. It may be employed sometimes, as the love of God has been already, to eclipse the glory and grace of the Saviour. Indeed, the *light* of the Spirit is, at present, made of more importance by some, than the death of Christ and the word of God. I, therefore, write, and would have you read and judge, with a jealousy equally scrupulous and scrutinizing. I have taken my place, in studying this subject, in the very centre of "the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths," of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that thus I may ascribe nothing to the Spirit which belongs to Christ; nor so present what belongs to the Spirit as to hide any of the wonders of redeeming love.

On the other hand, however, equal care ought

to be taken that we neither overlook nor under-rate any part of the work of the Spirit, or of the wondrous love which distinguishes his operations. Now, in regard to Adoption, all the children of God are "born again of the Spirit," "led by the Spirit," and "sealed by the Spirit." In like manner, all their knowledge and enjoyment of their adoption comes from His witness to its truth. Hence Paul says, "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Rom. viii. 16. For these and similar reasons the Comforter is expressly and emphatically called "the Spirit of Adoption."

With such facts before us, there can be neither danger nor difficulty in tracing, even minutely, the love of the Spirit, as that is manifested in connexion with Adoption. It shines brightly even in the preliminary step of convincing us that our natural relationship to God, as "the Father of our spirits," is not sonship. We are all, indeed, by creation, "His offspring." Yes; and, by nature, we should all trust to that, as enough for safety. So prone is the human mind to rest satisfied with mere natural and nominal relations to God, that the Jews reckoned themselves the children of God because they were the "seed of Abraham." And although this presumptuous fallacy was met and



unmasked by the startling oracle, "God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham," many have taught, and more believed, even in the face of John the Baptist's protest, that baptism makes an infant a child of God, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven.

We may never have attached any such importance to our baptism, nor founded any claim or hope upon our descent from pious parents: but the time was when we took for granted that we needed no nearer relationship to God than our birth in a Christian land gave us. When we spoke of God, it was as our Maker chiefly, if not only. We addressed Him, indeed, as "our Father," when we repeated the Lord's Prayer; but we thought of him only as our Creator and Preserver; and never dreamt that He who made us could have "no mercy upon us," apart from redeeming us from the curse of the law by the death of his Son.

This delusion did not end with our childhood. It would never have ended by age or experience, had not the Holy Spirit convinced us, that "we were by nature the children of wrath, as well as others." Eph. ii. 3. This conviction is His work upon the soul, wherever it is a humbling conviction. And what but love,—even great

love,—could have induced Him to implant it in any soul? For no truth, perhaps, is more hateful to the natural mind: it exasperates, as well as mortifies, our pride. Oh, it was “a night much to be remembered before the Lord,” when we first applied this humbling truth to ourselves, and said of ourselves, “*We are the children of wrath as well as others!*” There was more than our Bible with us in our closet then: “*Verily, God was in that place,*” whether we knew it, or not, at the time. We, indeed, were reading, or praying, or pondering; but it was the Spirit, working mightily, who unveiled to us the solemn fact, that we were both aliens and outcasts from the special family of God. Thus, it is owing to the love of the Spirit that we came to know, so as to feel and confess, the necessity of being “born again,” before we could be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

It will be easy and delightful now to trace the love of the Holy Spirit, in creating the *desire* to be the children of God. Did you ever observe how that desire arises in the mind of a penitent? Is it not the *first* wish of a broken and contrite spirit,

“Call me a child of thine?”

is not the first prayer which springs from the

heart to the lips, when we feel ourselves to be children of wrath by nature. Penitents, in general, adopt instinctively the prayer of the Prodigal, "Make me as one of thy hired servants, for I am no more worthy to be called thy son."

You remember that you would have been content, yea, well pleased, to be restored to the favour of God, in any capacity, or relation, which would have placed your soul in safety. To be *on* the right-hand, at the Judgment-seat, however far off from the spot where crowns of glory were falling :—to be *in* Heaven for ever, however obscure or unnoticed, would have more than satisfied your soul, at first. You could not see then, how God could "put you among the children, and give you a goodly heritage" in the General Assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and whose mansions are near the throne. You would have counted it "joy unspeakable and full of glory" for you, to have had the prospect of serving the servants of God, by carrying their harps after them on the sea of glass, or by helping them to cast their crowns at the feet of the Lamb. You thought of no crown nor harp for yourself ; but felt, that you could adore the Lamb for ever without either, if only permitted to be where He is.

Now there was real humility in all this : but it was not so wise, as it was well-meant, nor so very humble as it seems. For, as this is not the form in which Eternal Life is promised or presented to any one by the gospel, so it is not a form in which it should be sought or desired, by any one. It is, remember, “many sons,” or only as children, that God will bring to glory. Heb. ii. 10. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit did not allow your hopes or desires to rest satisfied with the bare prospect of just escaping hell, and entering heaven at last. He led them out, however gradually, to seek for an interest in the Great Atonement—for the regenerating power of Grace—for conformity to the Divine image ;—and thus led them on to embrace the prospects of the gospel, as well as the promises of it ; and to lay hold of Eternal Life, just as Christ has revealed it.

Do you not see the love of the Spirit in this ? Consider ; had you been left to take up with the mere hope of escaping hell, or of being merely “a hired servant,” in your Father’s house, you would soon have relaxed in prayer to God, and in dependence on Christ. There is, alas, but too little of both maintained, even when a hope full of Immortality is taken up : and there would be still less, if less than “the glory to be revealed” were

permitted to become the final object of desire or pursuit.

Besides ; it is of immense importance, yea, absolutely necessary, to be led on to the desire of full adoption into the family of God. Willingness to be a servant is all very well, as a feeling ; but as a principle, it does not, and cannot, produce either the kind or the degree of service which God requires. Indeed, when it is thoroughly sifted, as a principle, it will be found somewhat unholy as well as slothful. Our hearts, remember, are very deceitful, and quite capable of preferring that relationship to God, which involves the fewest sacrifices, and the least serving. It is, therefore, just as possible to hold back from embracing the hope of Sonship, in order to avoid the duties of children ; as to keep back from the Sacrament, in order to stand clear of its peculiar moral obligations and responsibilities. More is expected from children than from servants, in life : and in godliness, this is soon discovered to be still more true. O, it is well that the Comforter is “ the Spirit of Adoption ! ” By this, He proves himself to be the Spirit of sanctification and holiness. For it is Sonship alone, that is seen and felt to call for filial, cheerful, and impartial obedience. It is the duty of being “ followers of God as dear children,”

that explains and enforces “following the Lord fully.”

Consider now the love of the Spirit in fixing and exercising the mind of Penitents, with God’s solemn question,—“How shall I put thee amongst the children?” Jer. iii. 29. It is a remarkable fact, that all the truly penitent, however intent upon escaping the wrath to come, are yet deeply concerned for the *honour* of God in their salvation. I mean, that they wish to see how a holy and just God can, consistently, save them. Their chief difficulty lies here.

This is not what might naturally be expected from a sinner, when he is shrinking from “a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” Then, it might be supposed, that he would care for nothing but his own safety;—that he would catch at any hope of escape, without one thought about the glory of God;—that he would count any kind of salvation, in any way, enough for him. But a penitent does not. The louder he cries, “Who can dwell with devouring fire and everlasting burnings?” the oftener he asks, “how can man be just with God?” The more he feels his danger, the more he wishes to be honourably delivered from the wrath to come.

There is more in this concern for the honour

and consistency of God, than can be explained fully by the fact, that we know Him too well to suppose that he could show mercy at the expense of Law or Justice. This consideration has, of course, no small influence upon us. It ought to have much. But still, there is more in this state of mind, than the conviction that God must act in character, or in harmony with all the perfections of his nature, and principles of his government. There is, also, an anxious and honest desire to see God just, in justifying; to see God glorified, in saving. Accordingly, until something of this is seen, no penitent ventures to answer God's question, "How can I put thee amongst the children?"

This, however, is just the question, for drawing us to search the Scriptures, that we may ascertain whether there be any way in which God can be merciful to us, without injury to his character. And is not the love of the Spirit illustrious, in thus throwing us upon an inquiry, that throws us directly upon the gospel? Were our great question only—how shall I become better, or how shall I resist temptation in future? we might, and most likely should, stop short of the Cross of Christ, and think only of our need of some divine help. But the question—how can I become an adopted, accepted, and beloved child of God?—



cannot be answered by any prospect of mere *help*, however great. It is unanswerable, until we discover that, for this very purpose, or that we might be “dear children,” Christ both died and rose again. How wise and kind it is, therefore, to fix and exercise our hopes and fears, with a point upon which we can obtain no real satisfaction, but by finding out from the word of God, that He sent his Son to redeem them who were under the Law, just “that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Gal. iv. 5. Truly, the Spirit is often a Comforter, when we do not think him so ! Yes ; his work is often in tender love, when we suspect him of desertion or denial. We, no doubt, thought, when turning over and over in our minds, the absorbing inquiry,—“Am I a child of God—shall I ever be one of His family?”—that it was very trying, and somewhat strange, that we could come to no settled conclusion ! But see now—what Love regulated all the work of the Spirit, in this apparent “standing afar off.” He was thus taking care, that we should come near enough to the Cross, by the Scriptures, to see in it, and for ourselves, that the great Sacrifice which made mercy free, made adoption equally free ; that the Blood which cleanseth from all sin, cancels all unworthiness, and gives power, right, and welcome, to all who

receive Christ crucified, to regard themselves as the children of God.

There is much of the love of the Spirit manifested, in thus shutting up Penitents "to the faith" of the gospel, for the relief of their anxieties about Sonship. No direct witness of the Spirit with their own spirit could, under ordinary circumstances, do them so much good. It might be more agreeable to us, to have a sense of sonship, or the consciousness of adoption, borne in upon our minds by an impulse: but it would neither be so profitable or safe. We should be in no small danger of attaching more value to it, than to the Cross; and in great danger of making less use of our Bibles. The Holy Spirit, therefore, does not give a *sense* of any thing, which would set aside or lessen the necessity of "a life of faith" on the Son of God. He witnesses to no *sonship*, but what is drawn from the Cross, and held at the Cross, by humble and prayerful faith. Accordingly, even those cloudless and glorious discoveries of sonship, which hallow and enshrine the death-bed of some saints, are, most likely—indeed certainly—all made through the medium of their former experimental knowledge of the grace and power of Christ; then, gathered into one full-orbed sight of the Lamb slain! I mean,—that the Spirit's

witness then, is not to their worth, but to the worthiness of the Lamb. It seals, or accredits, of course, their sincerity as the followers of the Lamb: but it shines from the Sun of Righteousness himself. Yes; the life of faith is at its height, when even the holiest Christians are dying, whether in triumph or tranquillity!

The witness of the Holy Spirit with the spirits of the children of God, to their Adoption, is, confessedly, a difficult subject. One thing, however, is certain,—and sheds great light upon both His love and witness,—that He does not witness *against* the testimony of our own spirits, but *with* it. When our own heart or conscience condemns us for known sin, or for heartless prayer—or for allowed inconsistencies—or for the indulgence of unhallowed tempers and worldly-mindedness,—the Holy Spirit is too holy; yes, and loves us too well, to shine upon our souls. He bears witness to our adoption, only when our own spirit witnesses, that we are honestly trying to walk worthy of our high calling. When we cease to conduct ourselves as the children of God, the Comforter ceases to act as the Spirit of Adoption, until we return to filial obedience and submission.

This is—real love to us! For if we could retain the sense of Sonship, after having lost the spi-

rit of prayer ; or could we carry the hope of Adoption, into the paths of backsliding, without dimming it, we should soon become prayerless, if not apostate.

So far, the rule of the Spirit's witness is as plain, as it is wise and holy. There are, however, not a few very exemplary Christians, whose own spirits bear them witness, that they are trying to walk with God, and to lean entirely upon Christ, and to act as children ; and yet they say, that they are "utter strangers to the Spirit of Adoption." Now, what shall I say to this ? Few, perhaps, have seen oftener, or corresponded more with, this class, than myself. None can tell the dilemmas I have been placed in, by cases of this kind, when I have had to answer startling questions, upon the spur of the moment, to the victims of depression and despondency :—a class more numerous than many suppose, and more tempted than I suspected. Often (and that just in order to throw their thoughts into a new channel, and thus to gain a hearing) have I been compelled, whilst my heart was bleeding with sympathy, to ask with a smile, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up to heaven" for the Spirit of Adoption, without gazing on your Bibles, at the same time, for the *law* of adoption ? How can you ex-

pect the Spirit to witness to your sonship, if you will not “hear what the Spirit saith” to them who have fled to Christ? That is,—that to as many as have received Christ, or believed on His name, he gives power to become (or empowers them to consider themselves) the children of God. Here is the revealed and written fact, that all who believe with the heart, are warranted and welcome to regard themselves as “the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ:” and, if you refuse to take the *word* of the Spirit for this fact, how can you expect Him to witness with your spirit? Why; were you to reason in other things, as you do in this matter, you would render your Bible of no use. But you take the word of the Spirit, for the fact of your sin, your danger, your weakness, and your dependence: why not, then, for your adoption? It is just as true, that the penitents are all the children of God by grace, as that the impenitent are all the children of wrath by nature. You are just as welcome to consider yourself a child of God, as you are willing to be a debtor to Christ and a servant of God. Yes; willing servants (made so by the Cross) are welcome sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

## No. VI.

### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT IN ILLUMINATION.

IT is by far too common to confine the expression, "After ye were illuminated,—to the first entrance of divine light into the mind. That, indeed, is illumination, as contrasted with the former blindness of the mind, just as the dawn is light, compared with darkness; but it no more amounts to the illumination of the Spirit, than the first faint streaks of the morning, to daylight. It is spiritual light; but not spiritual illumination: for although these are the same in kind, they differ as much in degree, as the second power of vision given to the blind man at Bethsaida. He saw, after the first touch of the Saviour's hand: but he only saw "men, as trees, walking." It was when Jesus "put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up," that he was "restored, and saw every man clearly." Mark viii. 24.

Whilst, therefore, it becomes us to say, from the very first entrance of the feeblest rays of di-

vine light, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see," it is very unwise to call this, illumination. It is a change "from darkness to light;" but not a translation "out of darkness, into Marvellous light:" for when He who commanded the light of the day to shine out of the darkness of chaos, *shines* into the mind, he gives "the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus;" and that is not, usually, the first nor the clearest discovery of a newly enlightened mind. Accordingly, in general, our first spiritual views of God are somewhat alarming. It is His glory, not in "the face of Jesus," but rather in the face of the Law, or of the Judgment-seat, or of Eternity, that we see then. Hence we say then, like Isaiah, "Woe is me; for I am undone, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isa. vi. 5. Or, with Job, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job xlii. 5, 6.

This self-abasement, and this self-condemnation, are indeed felt, even more deeply, although less painfully, when the mind discovers the glory of God in the face of Jesus, or sees how "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Nothing melts or humbles like "this great sight."



No whirlwind, earthquake, or fire of conviction, brings the mantle of godly sorrow so fully or closely over the face, as the small still voice of a reconciling God. That produces just the effect, and all the effect, foretold in Prophecy,—Thou shalt “remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.” Ezek. xvi. 63.

This is illumination ! Our awful views of God, as holy and just, were light : but this is “marvellous light ;” sustaining all the majesty of His holiness and justice, and yet softening and enshrining both, with pardoning mercy and paternal love. And until God is seen somewhat in this lovely light, we are not illuminated so, that, like the Hebrews, we could “endure a great fight of afflictions,” or even be calculated upon for steadfastness in the faith. It is the illumination of the Spirit, not the dawn of His light, that produces well-doing and enduring Christians.

This distinction between some light, and considerable illumination, will go far in explaining that sad oversight of the Love of the Spirit, which is so common amongst many, who are certainly not strangers to the work of the Spirit. They think nothing love, but comfort ; nothing sym-

pathy, but consolation : and as they are uncomfortable, they are ready to conclude that they are unconverted, and thus not loved by the Spirit at all. This conclusion is often drawn by the weary and heavy laden, who, although seeking rest to their souls, cannot find any “quiet rest :” and it would be oftener drawn, were they not glad to cling to any thing, which was any proof or token that they are not given up to a reprobate mind. It is their dread of being rejected, or “let alone,” by God entirely, that makes them so willing to hear the best construction put upon their fears and distress. These are not removed, nor much relieved, but they are alleviated, by the kind interpretations, which Ministers and pious friends give of such symptoms. It is something, and that something is not a little to a trembling conscience, or a sinking heart, to be told kindly—that “God would not have showed you such things, had he intended no mercy ;—you would not feel as you do if God had given you up ;—a reprobate mind is a reckless mind ; a seared conscience is past feeling. But this is not your case ; you are in a far more hopeful state now that you are afraid to hope, than you were whilst you had no fears.”

There is not, indeed, much of the gospel in all this ; but still it is “a word in season to the weary,”

which often enables them to "look again" to the gospel, or inclines them to try again to find peace. In like manner, they are somewhat encouraged, although not exactly comforted, when Ministers or friends reason with them "out of the Scriptures," showing, from the case of the Ephesians, that there is not only love, but "great love," manifested in *quicken*ing a sinner from spiritual death. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." Eph. ii. 4, 5.

It is not common to quote, as I have done, the words, "together with Christ;" much less to add the words which follow, "and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Verse 6. All this is usually omitted, when reasoning, with the timid and trembling, from the fact of their quickening, to the fact of God's love to their souls: omitted, however, not treacherously nor heedlessly, but in tenderness to their feelings, and in the hope that spiritual life may soon be followed by spiritual joy. These two things are often separate for a time, in point of fact; and, therefore, it is not altogether unfair to separate them in argument, when the purpose is both kind and pure. It is,

however, unwise, however well meant. It defeats itself, whenever the trembling penitent retires to weigh the argument, by reading the passage. Then he sees, that the quickening, which (he was told) was a proof of the great love of God, includes spiritual resurrection, and is connected with some spiritual exaltation, which he does not even understand the meaning of. Thus, he finds no parallel between himself and the Ephesians, except that he, like them, is no longer "dead in trespasses and sins." Unless, therefore, he know of something in the gospel itself to encourage him, or recollect some case more parallel to his own, he is then in danger of being more discouraged than ever by the case of the Ephesian converts.

Besides ; the Holy Spirit is chiefly spoken of as a Comforter ; and, therefore, it is no great wonder if those who are very uncomfortable suspect very much that the Spirit has no love to them. They are wrong—sadly wrong, in thus suspecting the heart or the hand of the all-gracious Spirit : for, as "the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus," he must give death-wounds to the love of sin, and to the pride of the heart, and to the power of self-righteousness. It would be no love to wound them but slightly ; and no wisdom, to comfort the wounded spirit by the number or the depth of its

bleeding convictions. It is not the *begun* work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, but the *finished* work of Christ on the Cross, that gives real comfort then.

Were this distinction well understood, both the comfort and the illumination of Penitents would advance faster than they usually do. Their personal piety also, would make more progress : for it, too, is much impeded by trying to graft the hope of salvation upon the depths of conviction. Happily, that unwise process of comforting the awakened, defeats itself in the end. It is, however, very injurious, whilst it succeeds ; for the moment a Penitent takes up with the maxim, that his convictions are sure to end in conversion, there is an end to much of his diligence, and to more of his watchfulness. Little do they know what they are doing, who, in their sympathy with the convicted, comfort them by their convictions. This is stopping their flight from the wrath to come ! Accordingly, it is not very uncommon to find persons whose experience and hope amount to nothing beyond the single fact, that, at one time in their life, they had very strong convictions, which were very like the work of the Spirit. Their alarm and melting did not, however, lead to any consecration to Christ or holiness ; but merely to

a lazy hanging on upon the outward means of grace, with some vague hope that what they once felt would turn out, at last, to be a work of grace, as a matter of course.

This is a fearful delusion ! There is even infatuation in it. No man, in his senses, would treat bodily danger in this way. He would consider himself trifled with, if not insulted, were any one to say to him, “ Your deep sense of pain and danger is a very good sign : all who have ever recovered from your malady felt exactly as you do ; and therefore your pain will, no doubt, give place to ease in course of time.” Every man would interrupt this reasoning by asking, what *cured* those who recovered ? Not the course of time, without any course of medical treatment.

Why is not common sense applied as promptly to detect and reject the fallacy of taking for granted that pain of conscience will be followed eventually by peace of conscience ? Mental pain, like bodily, in some cases, is certainly a good sign. It is a proof that *mortification* has not taken place ; but it is not the physician nor the remedy. Whilst, therefore, I would readily say to any trembling sinner,—Your distress, and fears, and anxieties, are proofs that God has not given you up to a reprobate mind, and proofs that the Holy

Spirit is making you feel your need of a Saviour ; still, I would always add,—they are not proofs of your election, nor pledges of your final safety. All their value depends on what they lead to. If you do not follow them out by fleeing from the wrath to come, they may prove the forerunners of that wrath. If you rest in them, instead of applying at once and fully to Christ, they may turn out to be the first gnawings of “the worm that dieth not ;” the first sparks of the “unquenchable fire !”

You see now, I hope, the difference between light and illumination. I say “difference,” because there is more than a distinction between them. And it is of immense importance to remember this fact : for thousands, by forgetting it, settle down into idle waiting for more grace, under the rash presumption that the fear of perishing is the pledge of eventual salvation. Thus, instead of fleeing from the wrath to come by actually and immediately applying to Christ, they turn their momentary fear of that wrath into a reason for hoping to escape it.

Again I say, I attach great importance to convictions of sin and danger : but still I must repeat that he is not illuminated, nor much enlightened, who can be satisfied with having felt them



deeply for a time. Indeed, convictions which can find sufficient relief in their own depth or sincerity, cannot be very deep. A deep fear of perishing would compel flight, for refuge, to the hope set before us in the gospel.

How some new light upon the evil and danger of sin can be set down as saving grace, I can only explain by the deceitfulness of the heart. All the Bible illustrates and proves, that light upon this subject is intended to lead to Christ. Accordingly, when Paul prayed for the quickened Ephesians, that the eyes of their "understanding might be enlightened," his object was, that they might know "the *hope* of God's calling." Eph. i. 18. And it is not safe to call any light divine illumination, which permits us to stop short of that hope, or to hope merely because we have feared. We are not thoroughly in earnest about our souls, if any impression made upon them (whether painful or pleasing) is turned into an excuse or a reason for not pressing to an issue the question of their salvation.

You are now prepared to consider how much love the Spirit manifests in standing "afar off" as a Comforter, from all who try to take comfort from his work, instead of seeking for it in the finished work of Christ. For, were all fears, and all con-

victions, and all arrests of conscience, really His work, he will not witness to them, as being "the good work" of grace on the heart, until they are employed as reasons and motives for trusting the soul to the great work of Christ on the Cross. He will not only stand aloof from comforting those who take up with their own feelings instead of Christ; but he will leave these feelings to subside, perhaps to vanish away so completely, that the heart shall become harder than it was before its first meltings.

There is wonderful love in this, however it may seem anger at the time. There is indeed, anger in it too; but it is the paternal anger which chastens sharply, because paternal love is strong. For, were we allowed to comfort ourselves with the hope of salvation just because certain feelings prevailed in us at one time, we should soon under-rate Christ as much as Legalists do, and neglect holiness as much as Antinomians do.

I have dwelt upon this point too long, perhaps; but I have done so, that you may dread and hate the bare idea of resting satisfied with any light, which does not bring you into thorough subjection to the Cross and Sceptre of Christ. The light is not divine, which is not leading on this subjection, from year to year. "And if the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

It is not darkness, however, if our relief from distressing fears of God, arises from his lovely character as God in Christ, delighting in mercy, and reconciling the world unto himself. Relief from this view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus, is spiritual illumination, and that, too, in a very high and emphatic sense. The light of Creation is not more directly the effect of the power of the Spirit, than this light upon the character of God is from the love of the Spirit. It is totally different from the mild and gentle views of the Almighty, which fashion and philosophy talk of. The believing views of a Christian are mild and gentle ; but not in the world's sense of the words, nor for the world's reasons. The leniency and love which worldly men ascribe to God, have not only no moral influence upon their hearts or habits, but they are ascribed to him just to hide the danger of caring nothing about him. They are not conclusions drawn from the unspeakable gift of his Son as a Saviour, nor from the promise of his Spirit as a Comforter, nor from the unsearchable riches of grace and the eternal weight of glory ; but from the base wish to sin without danger, and to die without fear.

The light of a Christian is, also, quite a different thing even from that of the formalist ; who, in speaking of the divine character, uses the very

words of Scripture. The expressions, "God is love," "God delighteth in mercy," "God can be just in justifying him that believeth in Jesus," are read and repeated by thousands, who neither wonder nor adore. All this is mere matter of course to them. It wins no love, and leads to no prayer : it illuminates neither the shadow of death, nor the pilgrimage of life : it is all phrases without meaning, or facts without interest. Not so to a Christian : he can hardly believe, for joy, that God is love ! He feels so unworthy of any love, and is so ashamed of his ingratitude, that he is afraid of presuming, even when most willing to be an entire and eternal debtor to grace. The words, "God is love," are infinitely more to him than words. He sees in them, the face of God smiling on penitents ; the heart of God yearning over his children ; the wisdom of God guiding, the power of God guarding, and the grace of God sanctifying, all his family. He hears in them promises of pardon, and pledges of acceptance, and assurances of glory.

This is illumination ! True ; it is nothing but the mind of the Spirit in the written word ; nothing but the meaning of Scripture ; but then, what a meaning it has, compared with what we used to find in it, and put upon it ! It is only old truth ; but it is now full and overflowing with new glory, to a Christian.

And, who is to blame, because all who read that "God is love," do not see so much in it as to be melted or amazed by it? Is the illuminating Spirit "a respecter of persons?" No; but he is a respecter of principles, and a respecter of laws and order: and if any will pay no respect to the word of God, nor to the reproofs of Providence, nor to the dictates of Conscience, He respects the authority of divine means too much to illuminate without them. It is as "the Spirit of revelation," as well as "of wisdom," that he enlightens the eyes of the understanding in the knowledge of God as love. Eph. i. 17.

## No. VII.

### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT IN INTERCESSION.

It is just as true that the Spirit "ever liveth" to help our infirmities by suggesting prayer, as that the Saviour ever liveth to intercede for the prayerful. Indeed, the respective offices of Father, Son, and Spirit, in reference to prayer, seem to sustain each other. The Father's readiness to hear, seems to be as much the Spirit's reason for helping our infirmities, and the Son's reason for pleading his own merits on our behalf, as their joint intercession is the Father's reason for answering prayer. He answers it because the Spirit suggests it, and because the Son presents it; and they promote it thus, because he delights to hear it.

This seems the grand moral reason why the Holy Spirit does so much to help our infirmities, and the Saviour so much to insure our success, in prayer. The Spirit knows that supplication has only to be "according to the will of God," in

order to find a sure place in the golden censer of the Son ; and the Son knows that the incense of his merits can sanctify and sustain it with the Father ; and, therefore, both ever live to intercede for us ;—the one on earth, and the other in heaven ; the one by teaching us to pray, and the other by praying for us.

There is as much holy wisdom in this arrangement for the success of our prayers, as there is paternal kindness in it. It enables us to know, in some measure, what degree of interest the Saviour is likely to take in our prayers. It prevents us from imagining that he ever liveth to intercede for those, who never pray for themselves. Thus we are not allowed, for a moment, to suppose that Christ is praying for us, if we dislike or neglect prayer ; nor that he takes much interest in our prayers, when we are heartless or heedless in devotion.

It is just as necessary, in order to secure the intercession of Christ on our side, that our prayers be “ according to the will of God,” as that intercession itself is, in order to secure their acceptance : for Christ will no more put heartless prayers into his Censer, than God will answer Christless prayers. In this matter, the Son looks as much to the way in which we treat the Spirit, as the Father looks



to the way in which we treat the Son. Whoever will not pray in the name of Jesus, the Father will not answer him ; and whoever will not yield to the strivings of the Spirit, the Son will not own him.

And who can wonder at this ? Where is the common sense, or the common honesty, of the man who objects to the duty of "praying in the Holy Ghost," or "with the Spirit ?" The help of the Spirit is just as open and free to him, as the merits of Jesus. He is just as welcome to ask for the Spirit, as to add to his prayers the all-prevailing name of the Saviour. There is no more obstacle between him and the help of the Holy Spirit, than there is between him and his Bible. He may as soon and easily obtain help in prayer, from the Spirit of grace and supplication, as obtain from his Bible the rules and reasons for pleading only the merits of Christ.

Nor is this all. That man is not to be found under a Gospel ministry, or after reading the Scriptures, who is an utter stranger to the strivings of the Holy Spirit. Every such man has felt, again and again, convictions of the duty of prayer, and impulses to pray. Many, alas, resist them ; but all who hear the Gospel feel them. Yes ; and find it so difficult to get rid of them, that their

ingenuity is put upon the rack, to find out speculative excuses for not praying. None have had such hard work in stifling their convictions of the duty and necessity of prayer, as those who are most dexterous and prompt, in excusing their neglect. Whenever a man asks, How can I pray in the Spirit, before I receive the Spirit?—he has had more stirring up from Him, than he liked to feel, or cares to confess. He does not wish for any more drawing or driving to the mercy-seat, than he has felt. He has had enough of both, to convince him, that praying will not fit in with his pursuits. He has been near enough to the footstool of the throne of grace, to see that he does not like it at present : but, as this confession does not sound well in words, he sets himself to excuse himself. And if his pretences of wanting time, or ability, for prayer, do not silence either his friends or his conscience, he tries to prove that the work of the Spirit is too great, and too good, and too remarkable, to have any connexion with what he has felt. It means (forsooth!) every thing, but “the day of small things,” which he wants to despise, because he dislikes it. Accordingly, he would be any thing but glad, to have that Spirit, which, he says, he has not got, and cannot command. In a word ; he dreads

having any more of His work, at present, than he has had. He saw its face, and did not like it : and, therefore, he wants to make out that the Holy Spirit has done nothing for him !

This is the real secret of all the pretences put forward by the delaying and undecided hearers of the Gospel. The Spirit of God is doing more for them than they wish at present : doing so much, that the only way in which they can get to the bustle or the follies which quench divine influence, is, to deny the divinity of what they feel at solemn moments. Not a man of them has the shadow of a doubt upon his mind, as to whether he could pray—when he feels thus. He sees clearly that, were he to *yield* then, he both could and would pray enough to commit himself beyond all retracting or retreating.

If it be thus base and criminal to “resist the Holy Ghost,” even whilst he is only convincing of the duty of prayer ; how much more, when he has convinced us of the advantages and enjoyments, which may be derived from it, and found in it ? And this conviction He has established in the inmost soul of all who have yielded to his first strivings. Whoever has allowed himself to be drawn to the throne of grace, and has there given way to his feelings, until his heart was

“poured out” before God, has found by experience, that it is good to draw nigh unto God. He may not have found, at first, all the enjoyment, nor all the relief, which he has heard others speak of: but he did rise from his knees a happier man than he knelt down. He did wonder, after giving way to strong cries and tears, that even he should have disliked to be alone with God in prayer. He did resolve, that he would soon return to the Mercy-seat.

The manifestation of the love of the Spirit, which occurs at this point in conversion, is peculiarly interesting. He may not exactly comfort nor cheer the soul, when it first yields to Him as “the Spirit of supplication;” but He either soothes into something like calmness, or excites it to a fervency of holy desire, which seems the forerunner of hope. If He do not reveal at once to the soul, its warrant and welcome to believe on Christ for its own salvation, he does show enough of the sufficiency of Christ, to satisfy us that “he can save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him.” Thus we are made to see and feel, that prayer is not a vain thing; that its efficacy is worth trying; and that the very act of trying it, brings some composure.

Thus a lesson is taught by the first influence of

earnest prayer, which is never forgotten. The Spirit lodges and seals a sense of the usefulness of drawing nigh to God, which can never be lost. It may be weakened; but it cannot be erased. Accordingly, the most heartless, yea, the most hopeless backslider, cannot forget nor despise "the days of old," when the candle of the Lord first shone in his closet. He may not dare to pray—he may dread nothing so much as being alone with God in prayer;—but he has no doubt of the happiness of those who are prayerful. He envies their state. He knows that there is no happiness for him, until he resume the devotional habits of his first love, and become a closet-christian again.

These sad effects of quenching "the Spirit of supplication," will enable us to understand clearly, how yielding to His intercession *with* us, secures the intercession of Christ *for* us. Christ will put no prayer into his Censer of much incense, which has not been put into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And on the other hand, it is just as true, that Christ will not exclude from his golden censer, any prayer which the Spirit excites. It may not be answered at once; but it is sure to be presented, accepted, and remembered. It is

as truly *filed* at the throne of God, as it was felt by the heart or breathed by the lips.

What an encouragement this is, to pray "in the Spirit," or "with the Holy Ghost!" I do not mean, of course, that we should pray, only when we are powerfully urged to the duty, by a deep sense of want, or weakness, or danger. No. There may be quite as much of both the love and the grace of the Spirit, in enabling us to keep up regular habits of devotion from day to day, as in those powerful impressions, which seem audible calls to extraordinary prayer. Indeed, wherever there is no *habit* of morning and evening prayer, there will seldom be any compliance with the calls or drawings of the Spirit to special prayer: for if the standing law be disregarded, it is not likely that the occasional impulse will be obeyed. Such impulses, however, ought not to be resisted. There is, depend on it, a strong "needs be," whenever the Holy Spirit bears in upon the mind, the conviction that there must be more prayer than usual, or more fervency than there has been! He foresees some imminent or real danger to our principles, our character, or our peace, whenever he stirs us up to "cry mightily unto God." This is the signal he gives, to forewarn us of approach-

ing trials of some kind. Yes; whenever His voice in the heart says, like the Saviour's in Gethsemane, "Watch, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation," something is about to happen, which we are not prepared for, by our ordinary devotion. Either trouble is coming, which we are not fit to sustain in our present strength; or temptations are coming, which we are not equal to overcome by it: either our spiritual or our temporal affairs are on the eve of some *turn*, which will involve serious consequences, perhaps for life; or Satan has taken measures to "sift" us "as wheat:" and, therefore, our faith must fail, unless the Intercessor in heaven pray for us! All this the Spirit foresees, and thus forewarns us of; and, therefore, he intercedes with us, to watch and pray for ourselves, that Christ may intercede for us. The sufficiency of the Saviour's grace, or strength, for sustaining us in the hour of trial, is, remember, "made perfect in weakness;" and it is by pressing upon us the immediate necessity of praying more earnestly, that the Spirit reminds us of our weakness, and apprizes us of our danger.

Christian, let no clamour against impulses in general, divert you from obeying the Holy Ghost, when he is impelling you to abound in prayer, or to improve your devotional spirit. You are in no



danger of praying too often or too long in your closet. Fanaticism does not send her dupes, nor Fancy her votaries, into the closet to wrestle with God for grace to help in time of need. Prayer against falling or fainting, is not one of the dictates of a spirit of illusion, or of delusion. There is real need for more than usual prayer, whenever your sense of need is strong. There is a critical *nick* of time at hand, whenever your heart tells you, that you are too far off from the Mercy-seat to be safe or steady.

I am not foreboding evil, if by that you mean only afflictions or reverses. I am thinking of far heavier calamities than a sick-bed, or than sinking in the world: these are, indeed, trying; but they are not ominous, nor so perilous as they seem. Swimming in the world is far more hazardous to a Christian than sinking in it. He knows how far he can sink, and yet be safe: but he does not know how far he can rise without losing his piety. He knows the worst that "bread and water" can do to his soul; but he cannot calculate the effect of luxury, nor of money, nor of ease, upon his present character or upon his eternal state.

This, however, is not exactly what I mean. Like myself, you may be in no great danger from abundance. There may, however, be a worldly

spirit, without wealth ; and a slothful spirit in religion, without the snare of leisure to induce it ; and a backsliding spirit, without any great falling off of public character. Here is our danger ; and it is real. For how many sink and settle into a heartless profession, by which they lose all enjoyment of religion, and are lost to all usefulness ! Now, it is to prevent this sad issue that the Holy Spirit is so prompt and pressing, whenever the power of godliness begins to decline in the heart. Then he gives warning at once ; and, for a time, haunts the soul with the interceding cry, “ Come, my people, enter your chamber ; watch and pray, lest ye fall into temptation.”

O, what falls, and shipwrecks, and apostacies, and backslidings, might have been prevented, had all who were thus challenged and charged, when they began to decline from their “ first love,” been obedient to the heavenly vision ! Let their folly and fate teach us wisdom. It is infinitely easier to obey these timely promptings of the Spirit, than to extricate ourselves from the entanglements of backsliding. An hour of special prayer then, may save to us, what the disobedient have not been able to recover for years, the presence of God, and the hope of acceptance. It will also prevent us from being, as they all are eventually, “ rebuked

in wrath, and chastened in hot displeasure," by the strokes of retribution.

A prudent Christian cannot but admire and adore the love of the Spirit, in interfering thus promptly and urgently, to check the first symptoms of declension, by powerful incentives to more prayerfulness. He will also trace his love in drawing out prayer to all the *extent* of the promised salvation. For, how true it is, even in regard to mercy and grace, that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought." Rom. viii. 26. It is said, I am aware, that our chief difficulty is, to know what temporal things we should pray for. And it is, no doubt, more difficult to choose aright amongst temporal blessings, than amongst spiritual, in one sense ; for we are very bad judges of what is best for us in this life, and very prone to desiremost what is most withheld from us. In regard to temporal things, however, we never desire too little, nor feel indifferent to what is good ; whereas, there are many spiritual blessings which we could but too easily overlook entirely, or dispense with until the evening of life, did not the Holy Spirit force them upon our notice, and draw them into our prayers. For, how few would seek humility, were not pride dangerous ; or spirituality of mind, were it not death to be carnally minded ; or com-

munion with God, were it not a mark of union to Christ; or the witness of the Spirit, were it not the proof of the work of the Spirit; or the joy of salvation, were it not an earnest of eternal life? Indeed, I dread to look at the long list of promised blessings, which would hardly be prayed for, or thought of at all, were they not brought to our remembrance, and built into our prayers, by the Holy Spirit. Alas, we are so inclined to be contented with, if not to prefer, a mere escape from the wrath to come at last, that, if left to our own choice, we should be in very great danger of not praying at all for the Divine image or presence; for the seal or fruits of the Spirit; for likeness to Christ, or for a sense of his constraining love. We could make less serve and satisfy us, were we left to our own choice, or to take our own way.

Nor is this all. We have but very inadequate views, at first, even of the extent of our need of mercy to pardon; and much more inadequate views of our need of grace to help. We mean, indeed, much of both, when we begin to pray in good earnest: but still, much less than we really need, even if we feel our need of more than we can venture to hope for at the time.

I do not know that I could have believed this, in reference to my need of pardoning mercy, had

the fact been told me when, like the publican, I began to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," without daring to lift up my eyes. Then, the fear of not seeing God through Eternity, and the impossibility of saving myself from the curse of the broken Law, made mercy unspeakably dear to me. But, now that I hope to see God as He is, and dwell for ever in His immediate presence, I see my need of a kind and degree of pardoning mercy, which I had no idea of at first. Then, mercy enough to keep me out of hell was all I thought of: but now I see the need of such pardon,—of such reconciliation,—and of such acceptance, as shall enable me to feel at *home* with God, in heaven, to all eternity! This is not, perhaps, another kind of mercy than that I began to seek; but it is quite a different degree of it, and leads to as much prayer. For, who can realize, or imagine, and not pray fervently for it, a pardon so gracious and complete—that the soul shall be perfectly at *home* for ever in heaven, even when it knows as it is known, and when it beholds God in all the majesty of his authority, in all the glory of his holiness, and in all the independence of his blessedness? The bare idea of going up to the eternal throne, even once, without terror or shame, is almost inconceivable: for how much mercy is required in

order to one welcome? But an Eternity of welcome, composure, and joy, at that throne!—What is the mercy which bestows and prepares for that? We should not appreciate it, nor think of it, did not the Spirit help our infirmities, and teach us to pray for it.

His love is not less conspicuous, in leading us to pray for all the grace we need to help, in this world. Now we have already found out that to be, more than we suspected at first. And yet, the conviction, “I shall need much grace to keep me,” is, in general, a very deep one in the mind of a penitent, even from the first. Indeed, so deep, that many yield to the temptation of keeping back from the sacramental fellowship of the church, lest they should fall away, or disgrace it. This is a sad mistake: for that fellowship is one of the most effectual of all the appointed means, to prevent falling. It is not, however, sufficient of itself. Accordingly, those who have been longest under sacramental bonds, know well, yea, best, that they have required far more grace than they ever thought of needing, when they gave themselves to the Lord and to the Church. There have been times of trial and temptation, when we have been ready to give up all hope, and even to throw up all religion. There have been moods of temper

or of spirit, when nothing in religion seemed sure, sacred, or interesting. There have been conjunctions of the world and the heart, by adversity or prosperity, which almost produced Atheism, or the wish that there were neither a God nor a hereafter. Oh, had not the Spirit helped us then, when our infirmities were becoming infatuations, where, what, should we have been now? Had He not brought us up from "the fearful pit and miry clay" of such temptations, and put a new song into our lips by putting a new prayer into our hearts, we should have sunk where we fell, and risen no more.

But whilst such restorations and deliverances should be had in everlasting remembrance, we must not forget how much love there is in the help we receive from the Spirit, which enables us to keep on praying, in spite of all our hinderances and discouragements. I do not think lightly of the injury which sudden and peculiar temptations do to piety. I wonder and adore, to see how the Spirit repairs and counteracts these injuries: not less, however, to see how He prevents the ordinary tear and wear of the world, and the natural tendencies of the heart, and the force of prayerless example, from wasting away both the love and habit of devotion. Keeping alive the fire of hea-



ven upon the altar of the temple, was nothing to this preservation of the spirit of prayer! That fire had many a shelter; but this is like a spark in the ocean, exposed to the waters beneath and to the winds above.

One way in which He preserves the love and habit of prayer, is, by the remarkable help he gives at times of peculiar need. It is no uncommon thing for Christians to go to their closet on one errand, and yet completely to forget it, when they catch the spirit of prayer, or obtain communion with God. Perhaps the original errand is, to plead for the removal of some heavy cross, or for the continuance of some temporal blessing: when, lo, in trying to bring this desire into harmony with the Divine will,—the thoughts rise amongst the Divine perfections which call for submission; and, there, get amongst the perfections which win love and awaken gratitude. The worth of the soul shines out in this light. The claims of eternity begin to open. Then, the favour of God is so felt to be life, and His loving-kindness better than life, that nothing else is thought of! Time, earth, cares, and comforts, are all forgotten in the absorbing glory of salvation, and in the beaming smiles of the Divine presence. The soul finds in communion with God and the Lamb, perfect peace

and joy unspeakable ; and thus loses time, in Eternity ; earth, in Heaven ; the body, in the soul ! And the less is really lost in the greater. We come forth, after such “ times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,” willing to do or suffer any thing, and prepared to resign all our wishes to the Divine will.

Christian ! let them doubt the actual help of the Spirit, who pray only by fits and starts ; and let them overlook His love in helping infirmities, who are satisfied with repeating forms of sound and serious words : we know, that He has enabled us to pray *without* Book at times, as well as with it ; and drawn us beyond all that books contained, and all that we ourselves intended. Neither books nor memory, could have led us into some of the outpourings of the heart, which we have been occasionally drawn into by the Spirit, when we have let him have “ free course ” in his suggestions, and have followed them up honestly.

## No. VIII.

### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT IN RESTORATION.

It is worthy of special notice and remembrance, that whatever was the kind or the degree of spiritual declension in any of the seven Churches of Asia; and however the particular counsels and warnings addressed to them varied according to the depth of their fall; still, the great general command to each of them was one and the same,—“Hear what the Spirit saith.” This is neither accident, nor mere form. Attention to the Spirit was the only cure for any of the defections. Without hearing Him, the Ephesians could no more have regained their “first love,” than the Laodiceans could have thrown off their lukewarmness. Without help from the Spirit, the “little strength” of the Church in Philadelphia was as unequal to overcome “in the hour of temptation,” as the Sardians’ “name to live,” was unfit to strengthen the things which were ready to die. Pergamos would have continued to listen to the

false doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes, and Thyatira to the licentious doctrine of Jezebel, had not both set themselves to listen again to "what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." Accordingly, all the return of any of these churches to their first love and their first works, was in consequence of renewed attention to the Holy Ghost; and only lasted whilst He was listened to in his Oracles.

It is also worthy of special notice that the Epistles to the Asiatic Churches, although dictated to John by the lips of the Saviour himself, and all opened with proclamations of His own supremacy as the Head of the Church, are yet invariably closed by the authority of the Spirit, as the Author of revelation, to enforce them. The Saviour does not conclude by saying, "Hear what I say;" but thus, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." Thus whilst He maintains his own office and honour as King and Priest of the Church, and condescends to act as her Prophet too, he asserts and sustains the office of the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of inspiration. The Saviour makes himself heard, that we may recognise and revere the Comforter, in the lively Oracles. The reason of this may not be obvious at a glance; but the wisdom of it is profound, and its design gracious. The prominence and import-

ance thus given to the work which the Holy Spirit carries on *in* the soul, by the Truth, like that given to the work of Christ *for* the soul, is, for the purpose of shutting us up to an entire dependence upon each. Were less said, than that Christ is “all in all” in the work of Redemption, we should divide our faith between His merits and our own morals, or seek to be justified partly by law and partly by grace; and thus never come to the point, in penitence nor in humility. For, it is by seeing that we must look to nothing but the blood of Christ for pardon and acceptance,—and that there is nothing else to look to for justification,—that we come to set ourselves in good earnest, to fall fully in with God’s plan of saving. Finding that half-measures will not do; or, that God will have nothing to say to us, until we have nothing to say to Him, but just that Christ died for the ungodly; we are glad to go any length in abandoning all legal claims and reliances; and become intent upon glorying only in the Cross of Christ. We retreat from one thing after another, until we give up every thing but the Cross, and say of it alone, “Behold, O God, our Shield.” Indeed, we get no quiet rest, until we cease to argue or plead, by any thing we have become, or intend to be; and begin to confine ourselves to the one plea, “Look upon us in the face of thine Anointed.”

This is that reception of Christ, concerning which it is said, "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." John i. 12. Now, just such a place in our attention and confidence, should be given to the Holy Spirit, in reference to his work. We ought as much to look to Him for grace to help, as to the Saviour for pardon and acceptance. Whenever we look into the Scriptures for counsel or consolation, we ought to look up to the Spirit for a heart to appropriate and improve them aright. Whatever means of grace we use for safety or edification, we should never forget that their success depends upon the blessing of the Holy Spirit. In a word, we ought to be as much afraid of overlooking or under-rating the Comforter, as of not applying to the Mediator; and as watchful against leaning to our own understanding, or trusting our own hearts, as against self-righteousness or legality: for the work of the Spirit is as much intended to shut us out from self-dependence, in the matter of sanctification, as the work of Christ is to shut us out from self-complacency, in the matter of justification.

To concede all this as a point in theology, or to agree to it as a maxim in religion, is, however, not enough. It must just be applied and acted upon, as you do in the case of making Christ "all

and all" in your salvation. Now in doing that, you search out your legal tendencies ; you set them down as refuges of lies ; you not only pray that God would sweep them away, but also watch lest they should be swept back again by Satan. You are not easy when you find yourself looking less to Christ. You even become afraid of your sincerity in religion, when you are not conscious of a single-hearted and exclusive reliance upon His merits.

Well ; just such a jealousy and watchfulness should we exercise over our own hearts, in reference to the grace of the Holy Spirit. We must no more allow ourselves to forget Him when we open the Bible, or enter the Sanctuary, or engage in Prayer, than we overlook the Father or the Son. We ought to be as much afraid of grieving Him, as of dishonouring them : for as we profess to ascribe equal and everlasting glory to Father, Son, and Spirit, we are bound to pay them equal attention. I mean—that the attention given to the Spirit, should not be left to accident, nor paid in formal compliment. And it need not be so. It is just as easy, because as much our duty, to give Him his proper place in our confidence, as to give the Father and the Son their place. We took some pains to ascertain, and to fix in our minds, the precise reference



which our prayers, our hopes, and our feelings should have to God and the Lamb. We did not leave that to chance nor to impulse, when we became anxious that our fellowship should truly be with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ: and the fellowship or "communion of the Holy Ghost," cannot be kept up by paying him empty compliments, nor by yielding vague honours to him.

I dare not ask yet, whether you feel deeply interested in these hints. They are both too few and feeble to command absorbing attention, or to excite much expectation. Perhaps they do not even suggest to you their precise design—which is, to explain how backsliding and declension chiefly arise. Now that is not fully explained by saying, that some sin of omission or of commission grieved the Spirit of God, and then the power of godliness declined rapidly. This is, indeed, quite true; but it is not all the truth. The sin, whether of omission or of commission, or of both, which led to this sad result, was, itself, preceded and occasioned by inattention to the Holy Spirit, or by expecting help from his grace without hearing his word. For "what the Spirit *saith* to the Churches," is as much His means of sanctifying and comforting, as what the Saviour hath done and suffered for the Church is God's reason for

pardoning. Now we expect no pardon, apart from the Cross. We are quite sure that we should receive none, were we to look away from the Cross, or even to look to it but partly. Well; it is just as true, that we are not warranted to expect grace to help, apart from an impartial use of the word of grace. The Spirit sanctifies, and sustains, and consoles, "by the Truth," just as God acquits and accepts by the Atonement. But how few so notice this fact, as to follow up their full submission to the Cross, by a full submission to "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Here is the real secret of backsliding, and of that loss of "first love," which is so common. We content ourselves with selecting, here and there, from the Holy Scriptures, a few of the most remarkable directions for walking in the Spirit; and a few of the most solemn warnings against grieving the Spirit; and, having adopted these general maxims, together with certain strong phrases about the power of the Spirit, we take for granted that we are as orthodox and honest in reference to Him, as we took pains to be in regard to the Saviour.

Now I do not mean to insinuate, that we are either willingly or wittingly dishonest, in thus

satisfying ourselves with a general recognition of the claims and commands of the Spirit. No! We honestly suppose, that this will be enough to keep up and carry on our piety. It is too, as much as the generality possess, and more than some profess. What then? It has not always been enough to keep up the power of godliness in our hearts, nor to prevent backsliding in our hearts. Nay; it has not been enough to secure equal attention even to "the fruits of the Spirit." For, after all our professed subjection to Him, are there not some of them we have never yet set ourselves to cultivate or consider? "The fruit of the Spirit is, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Gal. v. 22. Look at this list, and judge for yourself, whether you have gone far enough in honouring the Holy Spirit. Well might Paul say, when he brought this list of graces and virtues before the churches, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Ver. 25. Why; if we had given as little attention to "temperance," or to "faith," or to general "goodness," as to "love, joy, peace," or as to "meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering," we should have made "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience" long ago! Even now, did our account stand as ill with the morals

of this list, as it does with the mercies of it, we should almost set ourselves down as being still unconverted. The absence of both "joy and peace" does not, however, prove that against us. Conversion may be real, even although our enjoyment be but small, and our love but weak yet. But still, although neither hypocrisy nor unregeneracy is proved, by the want of joy, nor by the weakness of love, inattention to the Spirit is proved against us by them: for as the good seed of joy, love, and peace, is as abundant in his word, as the good seed of faith or repentance, both the want and the weakness of the former fruits of the Spirit, must be occasioned by our not sowing that seed sufficiently. "He that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," Gal. vi. 8; and joy and peace in believing, are first-fruits of that harvest of glory. But still, they are as really the fruit from seed, as they are foretastes of heaven. Hence, Paul prayed for the churches, that they might have "joy and peace in believing;" not in wishing for them, nor in waiting for them, nor in merely praying for them; but in believing the joy-giving and peace-giving promises, or in sowing to the Spirit the good seed of good hopes and strong consolations.

This is giving the Holy Spirit his proper place, in a proper way. There is both sense and humility in wishing and waiting for the joy of the Holy Ghost, when we are sowing the seed of it, and watching the springing of it, and watering the leaf of it by prayer : but we are trifling with the Spirit, when we are not attending to what he saith unto the churches. For how can He help us on points, on which we neglect to “hear” him ? If, indeed, He had not spoken enough in the Promises, to comfort us ; or not enough in the Precepts, to direct us ; or not enough in the Warnings, to check us : then, wishing and waiting for the up-springing of the fruits of the Spirit in our hearts, without sowing or seed, might neither be sinful nor useless. It is, however, both, now that the Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, and to furnish us thoroughly for every good word and work.

Thus we might have, and we ought to have, the joy of salvation, and the Spirit of adoption, and the earnest of heaven, as well as the desire for them. They are as fully provided for, and as freely offered, in “ what the Spirit saith unto the churches,” as hope is warranted by what He saith to the world. “The Spirit speaketh expressly,” when he assures the world, that whosoever

will believe shall have eternal life ; and not less expressly when he says to the church, “ he that believeth hath eternal life, and shall not come into condemnation.” Yea, there is *much* “ written ” to believers, for the express purpose, that they “ may know that they have eternal life ; ” and thus feel encouraged and bound to continue a life of faith on the Son of God.

It is by overlooking this, that backsliding is so common. Many converts do not listen to the good and comfortable words of the Spirit, the belief of which gives joy and peace : but waste their time in wishing for comfort to come into their minds, or to spring up in their hearts ; not from what He has said, but from what He can do. The consequence is, they have not enough of “ the peace of God,” nor of “ the comfort of the Holy Ghost,” to keep their hearts and minds happy or steadfast ; and thus they lose their first love, and often neglect their first works.

If you have never studied this subject before, you are in some danger of getting impatient with this mode of treating it : especially as I hardly seem to have a definite object before me. Do you then ask me, what I mean ? I am glad of it ; for a plain question will bring me to the point, or stop me altogether. Well ; I mean,

that you have nothing to expect from the Spirit, but just what the Saviour promised ; which is, that the Comforter would sanctify and console by the Truth—by leading into all Truth,—and by bringing it to remembrance. If, therefore, you and I overlooked or forgot this fact, and satisfied ourselves with listening to the Spirit on only a *few* great truths, what could be expected, but that our comforts should be few and small, and thus our declensions many ?

Now, do not quarrel nor quibble with this fact, as if it would impose upon you a task which you have neither time nor ability to undertake. All that the Spirit hath said to the churches, is not so much, but that it may be examined and considered too, by reading over the Epistles—not the work of a month to the busiest ! And begin, if you will, by hearing what he hath said to comfort, and thus to confirm, them who believe. You want to know whether the righteousness of Christ is imputed to you ; and He says, that it is “ upon all them that believe.” Rom. iv. 22. You want to know whether you are a child of God ; and He saith, “ ye are all the children of God through faith in Christ.” You want to know whether your sins are pardoned ; and He saith, “ he that



believeth is justified from all things." What do you mean by comfort, if this be not enough to comfort you? For, what more could the Spirit say to you, were he to speak to you as he did to the prophets and apostles? True; the comfort of these sweet assurances turns upon faith. They are only addressed to believers. What then? You are not as an unbeliever, if all your reliance be upon Christ, for the holy salvation proclaimed in the gospel. You are a believer, if you love salvation from sin and wrath, and be honestly seeking it by prayer. The Spirit does not stand upon niceties, nor lay down perplexing distinctions, when speaking of faith. He looks to the heart; and when it is well disposed towards the Cross and Sceptre of Christ, and willing to be a debtor and dependant for all mercy and grace, he recognises faith, whoever else may doubt or deny its existence. O yes; the love of the Spirit is too tender and considerate, to perplex or embarrass a humble penitent with intricate questions about the nature of faith. The substance of His questions is,—in whom do you believe for salvation? and for what holy purpose do you believe? and if our souls in answer to this appeal, throw themselves upon the Lamb slain for grace and law,

the Spirit saith, "be of good cheer, thy sins, which are many, are forgiven; go, and sin no more."

There would be less backsliding, if this were believed. Neither Satan nor the world would be able to get such a hold upon us as they do, if we took care to keep a firm hold upon what the Spirit saith to the churches, as a Comforter. And were He to be as much listened to as a Sanctifier, there would soon be but few complaints about desertion, or darkness, or doubts.

Where backsliding, however, has occurred, what the Spirit saith, is, "Remember from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do thy first works. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against thee, with the sword of my mouth." Rev. ii. 16. And He keeps his word! The Spirit makes his sword turn against the backsliding, until they return to their first love and their first works. Accordingly, they can find no comfort in His promises; no refreshing from His ordinances; and but little hope from the glorious gospel itself. Thus, their Bibles become to them books they are afraid to open; and sacraments, awful hazards; and their closets, painful retirements.

But still, the Spirit does not say, even to such,

that they are hypocrites ; nor that they never knew the grace of God in truth. No ! He treats them as fallen ; but not as if they never had stood. Accordingly, He sends them to recommence their “first works,” and not to begin their faith anew. I mean, He does not treat them as unbelievers, but as ungrateful and disobedient children, who require to be both wooed and warned to return home. Here, again, the love of the Spirit shines brightly ! He does not make the worst of very bad cases ; but even when “things are ready to die,” says, “Be watchful, and strengthen” them.

The general sentiment of this Essay will come under your notice in another form, when I trace the love of the Spirit watering and ripening the good seed of his own word. As, however, I have referred so much to the Apocalyptic Epistles in this chapter, I cannot close it without reminding you, that the “first works” of the primitive churches included one work, which very few modern Christians begin with—the consecration of their *property* to spread the Gospel. I say, to the spread of the Gospel ; not the aggrandisement of its Ministers, nor to the architecture of its temples. They laid their goods at the feet of the Apostles, that the Apostles might lay the Gospel

before the world, and enable its poor adherents to be faithful unto death.

This, when it is done at all now by individuals, is usually their *last*, instead of their first work. And yet, the first emotions of a true convert, are very much akin to the benevolent feelings of the first converts at Pentecost. Indeed, were the Ministers of the Gospel as much pledged to the world now, or as intent upon carrying or sending the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles, as the Apostles were then, rich converts would do now as they did then ; and the first work of every Christian, who had any property beyond the necessities of his family, would be to distribute to necessitous saints, and to help on the chariot of salvation. And this good work is not less necessary, now that it has to be begun in the churches. For the churches will never have the outpouring of the Spirit, until there be an outpouring of their own property into the treasury of the Lord.

This time is at hand ; and it will be a *searching* time ! It will soon be impossible for a rich man to believe the gospel, unless he is prepared to spread it. The kingdom of heaven is again making its strait gate, a “needle’s eye,” through which the camels of providence cannot enter,

without selling all they have, more than they really need. I tremble to think how many, when this duty is enforced, will, like him upon whom it was first enjoined, "go away sorrowful" from Christ, just because he wants their property as well as their faith.

## No. IX.

### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT IN SEALING BELIEVERS.

IF the witness of the Spirit be a somewhat mysterious, and thus a perplexing subject, to many Christians, the *seal* of the Spirit is an intimidating subject, to still more. Indeed, very few venture to say or think, that they are “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” Eph. i. 13. This is hardly to be wondered at, however much it should be deplored : for when a Christian asks, “what is the seal of the Spirit?” and turns from his Bible to commentaries for an answer, he is not made much wiser, nor at all happier, by learning the ancient modes of sealing sacrifices, letters, and property. To tell him, that believers are sealed, as these were, to distinguish and preserve them ; only widens the question, without answering or simplifying it in the least. It then returns, with the puzzling addition,—what is the distinctive mark? What is the impress of the seal of God, upon the children of God?

Now, when the question takes this form, we can never be far wrong in taking general ground at first, and saying, "they that are after (or according to) the Spirit, *mind* the things of the Spirit." Rom. viii. 5. For whatever His seal be, they are not utterly unsealed, who are mindful of, and take a lively interest in, the things which the Holy Spirit has written, and wrought, and promised. And in like manner, they are not altogether unsealed, who are not unsanctified. Whoever has any real features of the image of God upon his heart and character, is not quite without the seal of the Spirit of God.

So far, this process of settling the question may, indeed, somewhat confound sealing with sanctification and spiritual-mindedness. That, however, will do no harm to truth or piety. Far better confound the seal of the Spirit with the sanctification of the Spirit, than separate them. They cannot be separated, in fact, nor in experience, however they may be distinguished in theory. Neither the unholy in character, nor the carnal in mind, have any seal of the Father, Son, or Spirit upon them. "Their spot is not the spot of His children;" but "the mark of the beast," or of "the false prophet." Accordingly, whenever any thing independent of faith and holiness, has been



invented or paraded as the seal of Heaven, it has always been some mystery of Babylon, or some vagary of Fanaticism.

There is, amongst the truly pious, a familiar, but emphatic use of the word "sealing," which, I am persuaded, is quite as near to the real fact on this subject, as the definitions of any creed or critic. I allude, especially, to the well-known stanza,

"Prone to wander ; Lord, I feel it ;

Prone to leave the God I love.

Here's my heart ! Lord, take and seal it ;

Seal it from thy courts above."

Any Christian understands this ; and every Christian feels his need of such sealing, and desires to experience its help. For, having found, again and again, that warmth and tenderness of heart can relapse into cold formality ; and that our best frames are not abiding ; and that both our views and vows can be almost forgotten at times ; we cannot but desire this sealing work of the Holy Spirit. That may be more than the perpetuation, or the ratification, of our best views and feelings ; but we know, and are sure, that we are neither prepared for more, nor likely to obtain a higher seal, until our principles and affections are more sealed or confirmed. And we know also,

that when truth has the force of truth upon us, and whilst the spirit of prayer keeps up well, and whilst we walk humbly and circumspectly before God, neither our hopes nor our comforts are few or small. They may not amount, even then, to all that is meant by the seal of the Holy Spirit of promise, as "the EARNEST of the inheritance of the purchased possession" of heaven: but they are so like it, that they cannot be far from it. For we have some foretastes of heaven, and some humble consciousness of the beginnings of meetness for the inheritance in light, when we are walking with God. They may not, indeed, be very lasting, nor at all rapturous whilst they do last; but they are both sweet and soothing. They help us to go on with some calmness, and with more relish, "look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

It is, therefore, well worth our while to have the love of the Spirit, in sealing His own work upon the soul, even if His special seal be something more and higher, than settled principles and habits of faith and holiness. Indeed, the more than these it is, the more need there is that these should be sealed, or confirmed, by the Spirit. For, to what can you look in your religious experience, which, if left to itself, would not

have vanished away, like the early cloud or the morning dew ?

True ; there is vitality in gracious principles. But why ? Just because the Spirit who implanted them, keeps them alive. The good work of grace in the heart does go on ; but it does so, because He who began it, carries it on. Where would its goodness or its progress have been at this moment, had it depended entirely upon its first powerfulness, or upon our prudence ? Alas, we have often brought that good work to a very low ebb, and into a bad position in our hearts. We have, at times, thought that it was utterly lost ; or that it had been only a delusion, from the first. And it would have gone entirely, had not the Holy Spirit loved it more than we prized it, and watered it more than we watched it. It lives, because He, in common with Christ, has ever lived to keep it alive.

This is emphatically true of that sense of guilt and danger, in which the work of Grace usually begins. For, had not our first convictions been sealed by the Spirit, as well as awakened by Him, they would either have passed away, or been shaken off. Self-upbraiding, and especially self-condemnation, are so unnatural and painful, that the mind does all it can, first to evade them, and

then to throw them off. The fear of perishing would never gain such an ascendancy over our self-love and self-complacency, as would lay us down, self-condemned, at the feet of God, did not the Spirit of God bring it to this point, and keep it there long enough to compel flight from the wrath to come. "A fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation," is *too fearful*, to be willingly admitted, or long retained, by the mind. It would be kept out, or cast out, if we could.

But if it had—we should not have fled for refuge from the wrath to come, to lay hold on the hope set before us in the Gospel. Had not the Spirit sealed our fears, until they shut us up to the Cross and the Mercy-seat, with the cry, "Lord, save, I perish," we should never have become believers nor penitents.

This sealing of the sense of danger, at the very time when the mind is doing all it can to rid itself of fear, is not, indeed, the sealing spoken of in Scripture. That, whatever it be, comes "after" believing. Hence Paul says to the Ephesians, "After ye believed, ye were sealed." i. 13. There would, however, be no believing with the heart unto salvation, if there were no sealing, on the heart, of the awakened sense of the need of salvation. It is only sealed convictions, that lead to

saving conversion. Do, mark the love of the Spirit in this ! It well deserves your admiration and gratitude. He carried out your fears far enough, and kept them up long enough, to render the Gospel glad tidings to your uneasy conscience, and to make Christ precious to your soul. It was, no doubt, very painful at first, to be kept on the rack of suspense, whether by terror or by timidity ; but it was good for you. It led to a fervency of prayer, and to a searching for hope, and to a casting of the soul upon Christ entirely, that more than compensated for all the pain. For you could not wish now, that your sense of danger had been slighter at the time, however trying it was for the time.

Well ; observe how it has been sealed by the Spirit, since it ceased to be painful and oppressive. You have not now that “fearful looking for of judgment,” which once haunted your conscience, or depressed your spirits : but still, you do look forward to the judgment-seat. You have lost “the fear which hath torment ;” but you cherish still a holy fear or awe of both judgment and eternity. You are neither altogether fearful, nor altogether fearless. Why ? There has been a sealing of your convictions at this *middle* point, between absolute dread, and perfect peace. I

mean, that the Holy Spirit has taken care, that you should neither despair nor presume.

It is just as true of the way of salvation, as of our need of salvation, that both our knowledge and love of it, require to be sealed by the Spirit, in order to live and last. They are not natural to us, any more than self-condemnation ; and, therefore, although more agreeable, they too would vanish away, if the power which created them did not confirm them. Accordingly, we know by bitter experience, that our clearest views of our warrant and welcome to trust in Christ, have become so dim and indistinct, that we could make nothing of the gospel for a time, in our own case. And, what is worse, our love of the gospel can wax cold, even when our knowledge of it is not clouded nor confused.

And had this darkness and disrelish gone on, or remained, when they set in upon our mind, where now had been our faith or hope ? Who does not feel, that he requires to be *kept* to the Cross, as well as brought to it ? This is a melancholy confession ; but it is only too true ! Our hearts can be treacherous even to the Saviour ; and our consciences, to the blood of sprinkling. They have both had to be sealed again and again,

in order to bind them to the only thing which can pacify or purify them.

But, thus, they have been bound to "the horns of the altar" of Calvary! They may at times, so loosen "the cords" of confirmation, as to seem about to fall or fly off entirely; but they do neither long. We cannot forget, for many days together, what we have known and felt of our need of a personal interest in Christ; nor can we give up, often, the habit of seeking, or of trying, to make sure, of being found in him. Why? we have sealed persuasions of the necessity of this, and settled desires to obtain it. Our efforts have not, alas, been equal to our convictions or to our desires; but they would have been less than they are, had not the Holy Spirit stamped our concern to belong to Christ, with stability and perpetuity.

It is peculiarly delightful to trace the love of the Spirit, in keeping alive, in spite of all the world's snares, and all the heart's treacheries, and all Satan's temptations, a settled sense of our need of an interest in the finished work of Christ. This need has been before us for years, in all lights and in all forms; but we are neither tired of feeling it, nor indifferent about its success.



Our hearts return to it, however they wander ; and our prayers re-centre upon it, however they fail for a time. Thus our solicitude to be found in Christ, has been so far sealed by the Spirit, that we do not, and dare not, give up seeking to be found in him.

It is impossible not to remember, in this connexion, how our general views and convictions of the truth of the Gospel, have survived shocks of trial, or of temptation, which must have upset them, had they not been sustained by the power of the Holy Ghost. Sometimes, the dispensations of Providence have seemed to us, at variance with both the promises and doctrines of Grace. We have looked for light, and found darkness ; for joy, and found only sorrow. Then, God's dealings seemed clashing with God's word, and His providence running contrary to his promises. This creates a sad dilemma ! When this suspicion settles in the mind, it unsettles every thing for a time. Oh, were there no seal put upon our principles, when the Rod of Providence seems to contradict the Pen of Inspiration, and the hand of God to undo the word of God, by mysterious visitations, how soon and entirely our faith would fail ! Yes ; had it not been sealed in the cloudy

and dark day, when all things seemed against us, we should have made shipwreck of both faith and a good conscience.

It is not adversity only, that can thus peril the life of faith. Prosperity also, not unfrequently, induces a state of mind prone to speculation, or open to sceptical suggestions. Satan thus finds it easy, first to amuse the soul with curious questions, and then to entangle it with plausible sophistries. And, having inserted the wedge of doubt amongst the mass of first principles, he drives it home, until they split up like dry timber or a veined rock. Nothing could stop their destruction, but seals which stop the rent.

If you have at all passed through trying exercises of mind from affliction or temptation, it ought not to be very difficult for you, to conceive, how the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of promise, seals the soul unto the day of redemption. This is not more unlikely, nor more inexplicable, than that, as the Spirit of faith and truth, He should have sealed your principles and desires, when they were giving way before heavy trials, or harassing temptations. You are no stranger to sealing, if you have passed through deep and dark waters, without losing entirely your faith or your hope.

You may well believe that the Spirit of promise can seal your hopes, seeing he has so often revived them.

I prefer to let the meaning of the special seal of the Spirit *creep out* thus, without formality of definition or announcement, that you may not only judge for yourself, but also enjoy what you discover. It is, you see, only a higher and stronger degree of the hope of Eternal Redemption. That is usually weak and fluctuating at first. Even the joy and peace found at first in believing, have not much of a heavenly character about them. I mean, they are not so much earnestst or foretastes of heavenly peace and joy, as sweet reliefs from present fear and anguish. They rather look back with wonder to the past day of dread, than forward with delight or composure to the final day of redemption; and thus are but *earnests* of "the earnest of the inheritance" of the saints in light.

It is then, when the soul is enabled to lift up its head, in prospect of the final Day of Redemption, with a hope full of immortality, that it is sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, as the earnest of heaven. When He carries out the hope of finding grace, to the hope of Glory also; and makes present communion with God and the Lamb, a sweet foretaste of eternal happiness; then, the soul is

sealed as well as enlightened—confirmed as well as comforted.

This is not so uncommon as some say. There are, perhaps, but very few Christians, who have not been again and again sealed with earnest of the heavenly inheritance; although they have not ventured to call or consider their

“Moments, rich in blessing,”

as earnest of glory. But, have you not known such times of refreshing, both in the sanctuary and the closet, when you found it something like heaven begun on earth, to see God in a light, and the Saviour in a light, which hushed all your anxieties, and filled your soul with peace? Have you not felt at times such *oneness* of spirit with all the armies of Heaven, that, you could not but see how instinctively and cheerfully your heart joined their harps, in ascribing “Salvation and glory to God and the Lamb?” Have you not said at the wells of Salvation,

“If such the sweetness of the streams,  
What must the fountain be,  
Where saints and angels draw their bliss,  
Immediately from Thee?”

This is the sealing work of the Spirit. Nothing is more unwarranted or unwise, than to regard that, as either indelible assurance, or an unalter-

able witness of sonship. It was not a full nor an abiding earnest of heaven to the Ephesians; although a real earnest whilst they took care not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they were sealed." Eph. iv. 30.

Observe this fact. Even whilst their first love was in its first glow, and when they were just sealed, Paul told them, that he bowed his knees for them in prayer, that they might be rooted and grounded in love, and that they might know the hope of their calling, and the riches of the glory of their inheritance. Thus he wanted them to have more sealing earnestness of heaven.

And that their first sealing did not confirm their souls long, is but too evident from the Saviour's message from Patmos; charging them with having "left their first love," and threatening to remove their "candlestick out of its place," unless they repented. These facts give the lie direct to all theories of sealing, which make the seal final or indelible. His seal, like every other part of his work, has to be renewed from time to time. Like His witness, it is not abiding any longer than we keep from grieving him. The Holy Spirit soon *unseals* every one, who makes a bad use of his comforts. And in unsealing the inconsistent and slothful, He evinces as much love, as when he

seals, most fully, the diligent and devotional. For if we could find the Sanctuary "a little heaven below," however seldom we were in our closets, or however unwatchful we were in the world, we should soon try more hazardous experiments.

You now see that the seal of the Spirit is nothing which makes either calling or election sure, apart from walking in the Spirit, and bearing the fruits of the Spirit. It makes these fruits foretastes of heavenly happiness: and that is all. But that is much! "The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance." Gal. v. 22. And what a sweet and useful sealing of the soul it is, when these take a heavenward direction, and something of a heavenly character! How delightful it is to love, feeling that it will be perfect and eternal in heaven! How joy improves, when we think of it becoming full of glory! How peace passeth all understanding, when we think of it reigning unto eternal life! How gentleness and goodness commend themselves, when we realize them as holiness which can never be tarnished, and as composure which can never be ruffled!

And this is the way to ripen the fruits of the Spirit. Instead of looking at them only in their connexion with this world, we ought to lift them

up, one by one, into the light and warmth of Glory, that we may see and feel how they will be "pleasures for evermore." But this subject must not be treated thus vaguely. It will come under your notice in a more definite form, in a subsequent Chapter, where the love of the Spirit, as the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, is traced experimentally.



## No. X.

### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT IN SANCTIFICATION.

It is not easy, even with the promise of the Spirit before us, to maintain a lively hope of sanctification, in the presence of the solemn assurance, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord:”—and it would be impossible to hope at all in the face of the fact that “nothing which defileth” can enter heaven, if we had not the Holy Spirit to look to, and depend upon. They know little of heaven, and care still less about it, who do not feel this. It is deeply felt by those who cannot forget, that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people; or an inheritance for which they must be made “meet” by grace, as well as made “heirs” by Christ. Such persons are not relieved from solicitude, or from suspense, in their own case, by knowing well, that meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, does not mean perfection in this world. They know too, that it

means more holiness than they have yet attained or attempted. They also see things about themselves, so unholy, that they are almost afraid to regard themselves as real subjects of "the true grace of God." Even what is best in their character and heart is so imperfect, weak, and variable, that they sometimes doubt their own sincerity, as well as their personal interest in Christ. And, had they not the power and the grace of the Spirit to look to; and, did He not "in his love and in his pity save them," they would despair altogether, when they weighed themselves in the balance of the heavenly Sanctuary. For, even with the Spirit to depend upon, they can hardly keep up hope, whilst the plagues of their hearts keep down the fruits of the Spirit in their character. Then, the difficulty is,—to see how there can be any sanctifying grace, where there is so much unsanctified nature; or how there can be any saving work of the Spirit, where the workings of the flesh are so powerful.

We must remember more than the *power* of the Spirit, when we feel thus, if we would continue to follow holiness with a hope full of immortality. We must take hold of His love, in order to get hold of his power, at such a crisis. I cannot see how His hand will work for my sanctification,

until I see how his *heart* feels towards me. Now although it be no easy matter to believe that He can love again, or love at all, after he has been so often grieved and vexed, by waywardness or by ingratitude ; still, until this is believed, or at least hoped, His power cannot be drawn nor calculated upon. Accordingly, we try to gather from our wishes to be holy—from our willingness to submit to sanctifying discipline—from our dread and loathing of being given up to the lusts of the flesh or of the mind—from our keen sense of the way and degree in which holiness would make us happier, and from our deep sense of the beauty of holiness—we try to gather proofs, that the Holy Spirit would not have shown us these things, nor sealed our convictions of them, had he not loved us.

We are, indeed, very ingenious in balancing things, and in making the best of bad circumstances, when the fear of having the Holy Spirit taken from us, comes in like a flood upon our hearts. It is, however, for a good purpose, that we thus try to make out a good case in our own behalf. We are trying to increase our love to the Spirit, when we are thus straining our ingenuity to keep up the hope, that He loves us. It is not in order to be less afraid of grieving Him, that we cling to

the fond hope of being still precious in his sight. O, no; when we are most intent upon making out to ourselves, that He has not left us entirely, nor forgotten us at all, we are most determined not to quench or vex him again. Thus it is for holy purposes, that we wish the Holy Spirit to abide with us for ever. It is because we feel His work in us, to be a "good work," and wish it to be carried on in its goodness as well as its existence, that we are so willing to hope for his continued help.

And we are right in all this. The Holy Spirit does love all who are trying to love him, and praying to be sanctified by his grace. His heart is not alienated, nor cold, nor grudging, towards any heart that wishes to open itself to the sweet influences of his holy presence. He knocks, and strives, and woos, even at the door of hearts which are resisting and evading him: and, therefore, it is no presumption, nor rash conclusion, to believe that he is not departed from those who, although they have grieved him, are yet deeply grieved for having done so, and honestly desirous to be "temples of the Holy Ghost."

Well; it will much increase and confirm your habit of "minding the things of the Spirit," thus seriously and conscientiously, to trace the love of

the Spirit in Sanctification. You do not see that love, in either its warmth or strength, by a hasty glance at the surface of your own conformity to the Divine image. You are not aware of how much He has done in you and for you, whilst you look only at what you have done yet in following holiness. His "good work" is greater and better than your good works. Not that it is a substitute for practical holiness. O, no! There is no good work of grace in the heart, where there are no good works of godliness in the life. There is none of the grace of the Spirit, where there are none of the fruits of the Spirit. But still, it is "the root of the matter," that brings forth the fruits of the matter. It is the goodness of the tree, that makes the fruit good.

It is not, however, by figures or emblems, that the worth of the principle of true holiness can be experimentally shown. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit;" a new creation; or the germ of a "divine nature," immortal in its principle, and holy in all its tendencies. Thus facts are stronger than figures, on this subject: indeed, so strong, that they are almost staggering to us, when we first try our own regeneration by them. No wonder! That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and in general, it has grown up so much

before we seek to be born again of the Spirit ; and, even after, it finds so much in earthly things, and in worldly example, to nourish and cherish it ; whilst that which is born of the Spirit, and is spirit, finds so little, that the former overtops and outweighs it. O, how difficult it is, when comparing that which is born of the Spirit, with that which is born of the flesh, to prove, even to ourselves, the existence of the spiritual principle, whilst the carnal principle is so predominant ! Were it not that the spiritual principle rallies again, after seeming extinct or overpowered ; and thus continues to exist like a spark in the ocean, unquenched by the many cold and stormy waters which go over it, I see not how we could satisfy ourselves, that we are born of God. But here is a fact in our religious history,—inexplicable in any other way : we cannot give up altogether the desire or the pursuit of holiness ; we cannot forget the necessity of it, nor the beauty in it, which we have seen and felt ; we cannot bear the idea of coming under the dominion of sin or Satan ; but however mastered or betrayed at times, we gladly try again and again to “ put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Is not this the finger of God, and the hand of the

Spirit? This “pursuing” of holiness, although faint, goes on and holds out so, from year to year, notwithstanding fightings without and fears within, and in spite of so many hinderances and discouragements, that I cannot account for it, nor explain it at all, but by saying—spirit must have been born of the Spirit, where the holy principle thus survives, and tries to surmount the world, the devil, and the flesh. For nothing of this kind is seen in, or pretended by, the unregenerate. When they are “led captive by Satan at his will,” it is at their own will too. They are willing, as well as chained captives: whereas, when a Christian is most chained, he is most unwilling, and never so unhappy.

You feel this. Well; I want you to mark the love of the Spirit, in producing and sustaining this holy principle, or “law of the mind,” which “the law of the flesh,” although for ever warring against it, does not overcome. Now, what but love could induce Him to implant this divine principle in our impure and earthly hearts? It is, remember, the germ of the divine image; “the seed of God!” Now, although our hearts are not, by nature, worse than others, we know most about our own; and ought, therefore, to judge from them, whenever we study the love or the



condescension of the Spirit, in beginning in them the good work of conformity to the image of God. We should not have begun it ourselves, even if we could have turned

“The stone to flesh.”

An angel would have been afraid to try it, even if he had been able to accomplish the change of heart: for, as he could only have influenced us by persuasion, he might have dreaded infection from long familiarity with the plagues of the human heart. No pure spirit, but “the Eternal Spirit” could deal with our spirits, long, and frequently, and deeply, without contamination and disgust. Accordingly, none of the angels can take “joy” in us, until we become penitents. Their rejoicing begins with our repentance. But, wonder, O heavens! the infinitely Holy Spirit, “for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, quickened us,” without reluctance, and has kept us alive without wearying. Herein is love: not that we loved Him or holiness; but that He loved us, and wrought upon our hearts, in which Satan was more welcome, and the world more precious!

When I think of the Holy Spirit, thus producing “spirit,” where there was nothing but flesh,

or carnal and earthly mindedness, I feel no curiosity to know the *mode* of his operations,— I am so satisfied and pleased with their effect upon the tastes and tempers of the natural mind. It is, indeed, *spirit*, that is born of the Spirit, when a sinner is made alive unto God, through Christ Jesus! For, from that moment, there is an absorbing concern about the divine favour and image, which proves, that, however “old things” are unseated in the heart, and however “new things” spring up in it, as to the *process* of the change,—the former are passing away, and the latter growing. What are definitions of the modes of spiritual operations, compared with this “demonstration of the Spirit?”

This divine change, whether sudden or gradual, speaks for itself, and declares its author, at once, by its holy tendencies. It stops the dominion of sin, and strips all vice of its blandishments, and makes holiness rise before the mind in winning forms of beauty and pleasure, and concentrates the desires and determinations of the soul upon real goodness.

I know, alas, too well, how this new bent of the mind may be unbent again and again, for a time, by the force of temptation and circumstances; but I know, also, that it can never be forgotten, how-

ever much it may be lost by the fallen backslider, or laughed at by the reckless backslider. I have seen the latter, like a ruined gamester, affect to despise his loss ; but his eye contradicted his tongue, and his smiles at his former experience were alternately ghastly and bitter. The mocker was evidently miserable !

There is a great mistake prevails, in regard to those who, “after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, are again entangled therein and overcome.” 2 Pet. ii. 20. It is supposed by many, (and I was one of the many long,) that those who return to their “vomit and mire,” after having known the way of righteousness, find enjoyment in their old sins. Enjoyment ! Transgressors dwell in a dry land, and their path is hard. “Were you such a fool,” (said one of them to me, when I expressed my astonishment at his apparent tranquillity, during the years in which I had no suspicion of his being a sensualist,) “as to believe my pretences ? Why, Sir, I never lay down a night then, without being prepared to end my misery in this world, if I should be unable to drown it by drinking. I carried hell about with me, whether you saw me canting or caricaturing !”—I have never been imposed on by

such gentry since ; nor once deceived by taking for granted, that they were miserable, just in proportion to the loudness and frequency of their avowals of being quite at their ease. I am persuaded also, that *theoretic* as well as practical Antinomians, are utter strangers to enjoyment, however they make talk. The very ingenuity and dexterity, which they evince in their arguments about eternal sanctification, and about Christ being their personal as well as their justifying righteousness, are too unnatural to be any thing but *masks* of a bad or a burning conscience. Such *spasmodic* forms of hope, are merely indications of secret despair. A man who has a good hope through grace, never assigns bad reasons for it, nor astounds sober minds by startling perversions of truth or logic : whereas the man whose wits have been at work, and on the rack, to find out doctrinal excuses in the Cross or the Covenant, for an unholy hope, tells more than he intends, when he affirms that he is not unhappy in his mind, nor wretched in his closet.

But enough of this ; although I could reveal much more. I just hint at these reckless experiments, that you and I may flee, as from a serpent, from all teaching and temptations, which would reconcile us to any theory of sanctification, that is

not both practical and progressive in its character. No man is "elect according to the foreknowledge of God," but "through sanctification of the Spirit, unto the obedience," as well as "the sprinkling of the blood of Christ." 1 Pet. i. 2.

Is this your creed, and conviction? Well; just consider the love of the Spirit, in leading us into all truth on this subject. We see now, that "Christ is, of God, made unto us sanctification," as well as justification, agreeably to what he taught as a Prophet, and to what he did as a Priest, and to what he demands as a King;—and not contrary to all or any of these offices. We cannot hide from ourselves the fact, that He teaches us to cut off and cast away besetting sins, lest we ourselves should be cast into hell fire; that He died to save us from our sins, and to make us zealous of good works; that He will not, as the living Vine, nourish any branch in him, which beareth no fruit now, nor own at last any workers of iniquity, however they may have prophesied in his name, or eat and drank in his presence here.

Thus it is according to the *sanctity* He taught, and atoned to secure, that we look to Christ as our sanctification. And He is so! O, it is not

little nor doubtful benefit, we derive from Him, in this respect. He relieves us from no duty, and winks at no sin; but he does what is infinitely better for us: He gives all the *motives*, by which the Spirit sanctifies us, and all the merit which hides our imperfections. Yes; it is His love, which the Spirit employs to make sin hateful and holiness beautiful, in our estimation; it is His Cross, by which the Spirit crucifies us unto the world and the world unto us; it is His example, that the Spirit renders authoritative in our conscience and inspiring to our hearts; it is His providences, which the Spirit makes to work for our good, in taking away and preventing sin; it is His presence in ordinances and afflictions, which the Spirit employs to make us humble and watchful; it is His "well done," at the judgment-seat, and the prospect of being for ever with Him and like Him in heaven, which the Spirit renders a purifying hope. Thus, whilst the Spirit is our Sanctifier, Christ himself is emphatically our Sanctification!

There is one manifestation of the love of the Spirit in sanctifying, which, if I could express it as clearly as I feel it deeply, I should present a line of thought, that would lay hold of every true

Christian it came near ; I refer to the work of the Spirit, in sanctifying by afflictions. He is not slow nor ashamed to make them work together with his own sacred influence, for the promotion of our holiness. If this fact do not strike and astonish you at once, you forget that afflictions are chiefly chastisements for grieving the Spirit. It is because He has been resisted or evaded, that God takes up the Rod of Providence, to correct what we would not allow Him to cure by grace. Now, that the Holy Spirit should not leave us comfortless under the rod, nor leave it to work as it can upon us, even after we have quenched much of his holy fire, and stood out against his sweet influences, and almost expelled him from the temple of our hearts,—this is love that passeth knowledge ! For, remember, if left to ourselves in the furnace of affliction, we should either sink or harden, to a certainty. Yes ; but for His watchful eye, and mighty hand, we should either “despise the chastening of the Lord, or faint when we are rebuked of him.”

You do not know much about real affliction, if you do not see His wonderful love, in this condescension to our weakness and unworthiness. You will find out, however, if you live, that you



have as much need of the grace of the Holy Spirit to sanctify afflictions, as to sustain and soothe under them. Yea, as much need of his power to prevent them from hardening your heart against God, as of his blessing to prevent the Gospel from becoming to you “the savour of death unto death.”

But I must close this Essay. I cannot do so, however, without imploring you—to number—to weigh—to tell yourself, the kind and degree of sanctifying influences, which the Holy Spirit must put forth upon your heart and character, before you are “meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Why; only consider how much He must do in you, and for you, even before your calling and election be sure to yourself! And now think, O, think deeply, what he must do when you are dying, in order to fit you for *any kind* of an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God, of Holiness, of Glory? What finishing touches He must give to the divine image, now so faint and imperfect on your soul? What ripeness He must produce then in all the fruits of holiness, now so unripe? What a volume of holy fire He must throw into and around your spirit, in order to

prepare you fully to meet God—to see the Lamb on his throne—to mingle with the general assembly of perfect spirits—to sustain the blaze and weight and work of unveiled Immortality? Quench not, vex not, grieve not, the Holy Spirit, at your peril!

## No. X.

### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT AS A REMEMBRANCER.

HAD not the Holy Spirit brought "all things," said by the Saviour, to the remembrance of the Evangelists, neither Matthew, Mark, Luke, nor John, could have written the Gospels. Either of them, no doubt, could have written much of what they saw and heard, during their intercourse with Christ: for all his miracles were too remarkable, to be forgotten by the witnesses of them; and many of his sayings too striking, to be lost by his regular hearers. He who spake as never man spake, was thus sure to be remembered as never man was remembered, especially by his disciples. He said, however, much that they disliked, and more that they did not understand, and not a little which one hearing could hardly fix, to the letter, in any mind. His sermon on the Mount was both longer and more sententious, than the strongest memory could carry away, without copious notes; and His chief arguments with the

Scribes and Pharisees, took so many turns, in order to meet the shifting grounds and temper of his opponents, that their effect, rather than their precise form, must have been the chief recollection of even the most attentive listeners. And when His ministry became, as it did towards its close, *prophetic*, as well as parabolical, and mysterious as well as solemn, his precise words became, of course, almost as difficult to remember, as they were to comprehend.

What a loss, therefore, must have been sustained by the world and the church, had not the Holy Spirit so loved both, as to bring to the remembrance of the disciples, "whatsoever things," Jesus had said unto them. They themselves took no notes of His sermons or conversations, at the time of their delivery. What they seem to have remembered best, was not what was most interesting. All that has proved most useful and consoling to posterity, in the Gospels, is chiefly what the Writers disliked or misunderstood, until the Spirit recalled and explained it to them.

I know, that it was never intended to be lost. The Saviour's gracious words, like his sacred body, could not see corruption, however they might be buried for a time. The oblivion of me-

mory was as impossible as the oblivion of the grave, in His case. Still, His words, like his body, were "quickened by the Spirit." He who brought again from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, brought to remembrance the truth as it is in Jesus, just as it had been spoken. John xiv. 26. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father shall send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

If you have never traced the love of the Spirit in this resurrection of the Truth from the grave of forgetfulness, you have not seen the compass nor the point of the Saviour's often-repeated command, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." Rev. ii. 17. The Spirit not only inspired the writers of the Epistles : he also inspired the writers of the Gospels ; and, in fact, re-preached to them all they had heard from the lips of Christ. Thus the New Testament is as emphatically the word of the Spirit, as it is the word of Christ : and as strictly the word of the Father as of both : for the Son invariably declared throughout all his ministry, "The words I speak unto you are not mine, but

the Father's who sent me." There is, therefore, a *threefold* inspiration upon the Gospels. They are the word of the Father to the Son, and the word of the Son and of the Spirit to the Evangelists; and thus the word of God to the churches and the world.

You see now how much the Spirit had to do, when the ministry of Christ closed on earth. That ministry was conducted thus: "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is Life Everlasting: whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." John xii. 49. Such being the case, that the word of Christ was the word of God, and all of it the word of Eternal Life, how important that none of it should be lost! But, what could have preserved it, had not the Spirit treasured it up, and repeated it to the Apostles? You remember that the wayside hearers lost it: that it was choked by the thorny ground hearers; that it withered away amongst the stony ground hearers; and that even the true disciples, who were the good ground, retained it but very unequally, and not impartially. Much of the good seed must, therefore, have been irre-

coverably lost, had not the Spirit gathered it all up as it fell, and afterwards re-sown it just as it was given.

I have sometimes, in order to endear the Gospel to myself, ventured to imagine, what kind of a New Testament we should have had, if the Evangelists had been left to the mere resources of their own memory, and to the guidance of their own taste and discretion, when Christ left the world. And even in that case, I could not but see, that it would have been a *wonderful* Book ! well worth reading, preserving, and circulating throughout the world, until the end of time. Yes ; had it contained nothing but just what the friends of Christ recollected, by dint of memory, it would still have been the best book in the world, and worth all that ever has been or will be expended, upon the perfect canon. It would, however, have been a very different book, in many things of very great importance. For none of the Apostles liked or understood the *spirituality* of Christ's kingdom, or the *atoning* design of his sufferings and death, until these truths were again revealed to them by the Spirit. None of them had much love to children, nor any warmth of sympathy for the Gentiles, until the day of Pentecost. I will not specify what, I suspect, they would most likely have



passed by or forgotten : but I see enough of both to make me thankful, that they had to speak and write “as the Spirit gave them utterance,” and “in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” But for this, we might not have known, concerning little children, that “of such is the kingdom of heaven ;” nor concerning those who only hunger and thirst after righteousness, that “they shall be filled ;” nor concerning all manner of sin and blasphemy, that “it shall be forgiven ;” nor concerning the love of God in the gift of his Son, that it was love to the world, as well as to the Jewish nation.

In throwing out these hints, I do not mean to insinuate that the Evangelists, if uninspired, would have kept back any thing they deemed useful to the world. I think they would have meant well, even when they judged ill. They were, however, men of “like passions” with ourselves ; and, therefore, had they not written by inspiration, they might have been tempted to withhold such parts of their recollections, as clashed with their natural or national prejudices. But all this, the love of the Spirit to them and us, prevented. He delivered anew to them, and through them to us, the Gospel of the great salvation, just “as it began to be spoken by the Lord.” Yes ; just as

the Saviour himself had delivered it ; now in set sermons, and anon in passing hints ; now in parables, and anon in promises ; now in explanations of the Old Testament, and anon in new invitations of Mercy and new commandments of Love. For it was not an outline, nor a digest, nor the substance of what Christ had said, nor selections of the best parts of his preaching and conversations ; but "*whatsoever*" he had said to the disciples, that the Spirit brought to their remembrance, and opened to their understanding.

Now, to say nothing of the light which this fact throws upon the perfection of the Gospels, see how it reveals the love of the Spirit to the world and the church. He refused not, grudged not, hesitated not, to repeat all that Christ had said, to encourage the guiltiest, or to cheer the timid, or to win the worst. Nothing was too good, too kind, or too strong for Him to sanction. He kept back nothing, weakened nothing, shaded nothing, of all the goodness which the Saviour had ever uttered to friends or enemies. Thus we have the Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel, from the lips of the Spirit, as well as from the lips of the Son and the Father. What a glorious confirmation, as well as illustration, we thus have of the perfect concurrence and

equal cordiality of the Godhead, in the glad tidings of salvation ! This fact proves that the Trinity are as much one in heart, as they are one in essence, and each person of the Godhead as truly "love" as "light."

You have often read and repeated various great and precious promises, as the word of the Father, and as the word of the Son, and marked with delight how they prove their love. Well ; just observe now, and remember in future, how they prove the love of the Spirit also. They came from His heart and lips, too ; and that when, humanly speaking, many of them might have been lost for ever, had He not republished them to the Apostles. For He thus *sanctioned* them all, as well as preserved them.

This is the point to which I would now fix your attention. The HOLINESS of the Spirit did not lead him to hold back, or to qualify, the pardons offered by Christ to the vilest and the most hopeless. The SOVEREIGNTY of the Spirit did not prevent him from repeating the invitations of Christ, in all their original width, warmth, and freeness. The SUPREMACY of the Spirit, or that entire dependence of all means upon his agency, (without which we can neither will nor do what is commanded,) did not lead Him to alter one word

of the Saviour's commands to repent, and believe the gospel. No ; although all the power of doing so depended upon Himself, he made the Apostles remember and write on the subject of human duty, exactly as Christ had spoken to the world ; taking care to bind upon all men, every where, the personal obligation,—“ Strive to enter in at the strait gate ;” “ Labour for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life ;” “ Seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you ;” “ Repent, or ye shall perish.” In like manner, the MAJESTY of the Spirit did not prevent him from reminding the Evangelists, of the most condescending and tender things which Jesus had said to the despairing and the despised. No ; the Eternal Spirit, like the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, was not ashamed of the contrite or the trembling ; but preserved for them, and transmitted to them, all that the Friend of sinners had ever said to the weary or heavy laden ; to publicans or harlots ; to prodigals, malefactors, or outcasts ! He took care to preserve even the Saviour's dying prayer for his murderers. Thus the Holy Spirit identified himself, heart and hand, with “ all things whatsoever,” which Jesus had spoken. He did as much justice to the doctrine of the Son, as the Son did to the doctrine of the

Father. Whatever Christ heard from the Father, he fully declared; and whatever Christ declared, the Spirit faithfully preserved.

You cannot be uninterested nor unaffected by these facts. They explain and justify the assertion of Christ, that the Spirit would be "another Comforter." This, however, is not all that I want to fix your attention upon, in the office of the Holy Ghost as a Remembrancer. Recollect how little was known, even in Judea, concerning the Spirit. His existence and personality were far from being unknown: but, except in reference to *prophecy*, his office and operations were very little understood, when the ministry of Christ began. Remember also, how little the apostles themselves comprehended the work of the Spirit. The Saviour had actually to begin his doctrine on this subject, by speaking only of "water and the Spirit;" not of the "Truth" and the Spirit; so little did they connect the Spirit with means. He had, therefore, to put Him forward, almost apart from means, in the first instance, before he could gain any thing like a fair attention to the agency of the Holy Spirit. In like manner, at the close of His ministry, or in his last great intercessory prayer, Jesus had just to reverse this order; and, that the instrumentality of Truth might not seem to be dis-

placed by the prominence formerly given to the agency of the Spirit, he said nothing about Him when praying for the sanctification and preservation of the disciples ; but pleaded thus, " Sanctify them by thy Truth, thy word is truth." John xvii. 17. Now our tendency to run to extremes on this subject, is just as great as their's was at first. The *natural* bent of the human mind is, to make means every thing, and the Spirit nothing ; and the *artificial* bent of it is, to make the Spirit every thing, and means nothing. Accordingly, to prevent both extremes, the Holy Spirit left the matter just as the Saviour placed it. He added nothing to the prayer, " Sanctify them by thy Truth ;" and He took nothing away from the assertion, " ye must be born again of the Spirit." He neither spoke of himself at all where Christ had said nothing, nor spoke less concerning himself, where Christ had said much. The reason is obvious, and full of love ; namely, that we may use appointed means as diligently as if salvation depended upon the right use of them, and yet depend upon the Spirit as simply and entirely as if there were no means used, or none to use.

In like manner, the Spirit took no exception to any thing, however strong, which the Saviour had ever said of the fulness or the freeness of Divine

influence. Jesus had said, "If ye being evil know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask him?" and that Spirit repeated this promise exactly as Christ gave it, without demur or limitation; thus pledging Himself to be the "free Spirit," which Christ had said. So also, He took no exception to the work which Christ pledged him, although the world was its field, and the end of time its period. Jesus had said, "He shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment;" and the Spirit put this promise in writing, as openly and willingly as Christ put it into words; thus undertaking to be the Illuminator of the world as fully as Christ was the Saviour of the world. And not less willingly did He remind the Apostles of the promise, that "He shall abide for ever" in the Church. He sanctioned and sealed that pledge too, although he foresaw all the labour it would involve, and all the provocation he would have to endure. His majesty took no offence at the weakness or the unworthiness of the myriads he had to teach; nor His purity, at the vileness of those he had to sanctify; nor His patience, at the waywardness of those he had to guide; nor His independence, at the poverty of those he had to console. In a



word, like the Saviour, the Spirit came, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

The Epistles of the New Testament form another illustration and proof of the love of the Spirit. In them, He as faithfully taught the writers "all things," as in the Gospels he had brought "all things" to their "remembrance." In the latter He led them back to "all truth;" and in the former led them "into all truth."

My limits will not allow me to trace, throughout the Epistles, the fulness nor the frequency with which He expanded and explained "the truth as it is in Jesus." And it is not necessary to do so. You can see at a glance, that whilst He adhered to the very letter of all that Christ taught and did, He also brought out the spirit of the whole, in new forms of argument and appeal, of power and glory, which set all the Saviour's "apples of gold, in pictures of silver."

The experimental design of this little treatise requires now, that the office of the Spirit as a Remembrancer, be traced in the well-known fact, that He still suggests and applies the things of Christ unto the mind. "He shall take of mine," said the Saviour, "and shew it unto you." This He did to the Apostles; and the Gospels were the first fruits, and the Epistles the full harvest of His

revealing love. He did not, however, cease to suggest nor to apply the Truth, when he closed the canon of Scripture. No ; He closed the canon, to open the heart to understand and enjoy it. Accordingly, every Christian recollects well, many timely and useful suggestions of both promises and warnings, which, if they had not been brought to his remembrance by the Spirit, he must have sunk under trials or fallen before strong temptations. How true it is, that “ when the Enemy cometh in as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him ! ” That repelling and protecting standard is never a *new* truth, in the sense of revelation ; but, in the sense of application, it is, although brought from the old armoury, as new to the mind, as if it were created at the moment. For then, we see in some promise what we never saw before. It suits and soothes us, just as if it had been made for no other purpose or person. It takes a place in, and exercises a power over, the mind, which could hardly be greater, were it a direct communication from heaven, or an entirely new gift from the Spirit. I do not wonder, whoever else does, that such timely and tender applications of suitable promises, have been mistaken for revelations. This was a mistake : but it is no mistake, to regard that application as the

direct and immediate work of the Spirit. There is new *work*, although only the old word.

I have not a little sympathy even with the more questionable experience, which speaks of —“*getting a promise*”—*lighting* upon a promise—having a promise wonderfully *borne in* upon the mind.” When the promise itself, and not the *manner* of obtaining it, is the source of comfort, I see no harm nor weakness in ascribing to the Spirit, the *timing* of its application. Getting hold of a promise at a critical moment, is no small blessing. In the case of those who have but little knowledge, or weak faculties, it is a very great blessing. Yes; and even those who are mightiest in the Scriptures, and strongest in mind, are glad at times to plead before God, like David, “the word in season,” upon which God had “caused them to hope,” in the day of former calamity or darkness.

I am fully aware that the Spirit has often been dishonoured by having ascribed to Him, visionary and crude applications of insulated passages of Scripture. He applies nothing but the meaning or the sense of the Word; and that, only in its holy design. He whispers no sweet promise in the ear of the disobedient or the backsliding, except to remind them, that they dare not appro-

priate it to themselves. . He has nothing to do with the comfort which those get from "dark sayings," who refuse to take comfort from the plain glad tidings of the Gospel. It is an evil spirit, not the Holy Spirit, who leads into fanciful interpretations of Jewish history or ceremony, which the Apostles have not spiritualized.

In like manner, it may be laid down as a universal maxim in the teaching of the Spirit, that He never stops at *one* lesson. Whenever, therefore, any person takes up with one promise, suddenly or signally brought home to him, and then rests his hope of pardon upon that promise, to the neglect of all other truth, it is quite certain that the Spirit of truth did not apply the comfort : for He leads into all truth, whoever he leads. This, indeed, He does gradually in almost all cases ; but in no case does he begin the lesson which does not go on, or which is not followed up by others. But whilst I readily allow and proclaim, that they are all duping, and thus ruining their souls, who are satisfied with having had a promise brought home to them at one time, whilst ever since they have paid no attention to the Scriptures, and but little to personal religion, I must contend for the experimental fact, that the Spirit does, from time to time, open and apply the Scriptures to the emer-

gencies of the divine life, and according to the wants of the prayerful. A standing proof of this occurs in the Sanctuary from Sabbath to Sabbath. It is always the case, that experimental sermons seem to some of the audience, actually made for them; and as much to the point, as if "the man of God" had heard their family conversation in their secret prayers, in the morning. He, of course, knew nothing of either; but the Spirit, who led them to desire and pray for a word in season, led him to the word they wanted.

There are only two things farther, which my space will allow me to hint at. The first is, that it would be a sad abuse of the love of the Spirit, to depend on his suggestions, to the neglect of searching the Scriptures, and treasuring up the word of Christ in our hearts. Those who neglect this duty, will not find the Spirit to be their Remembrancer for comfort, in the day of trouble. He will not supersede the use of the Bible by suggesting any thing, but warnings, to them who do not use it: for he is the Spirit of truth, not of impulse; and only "the Spirit of wisdom," to those who honour him as "the Spirit of revelation."

The other hint is, (and it might be expanded to a volume,) that we should find it almost as useful to go over the New Testament, looking for the

mind of the Spirit, as the Apostles found it to listen to the Spirit, when they wrote from his dictation. How differently the words of Christ sounded to them, when the Holy Ghost repeated and explained the truth as it is in Jesus! How often they must have said, whilst hearing the Spirit, "*How foolish and ignorant was I*, when I first heard these wonderful things from the lips of Christ!"

Why should you not go over your Testament again, marking, from page to page, the new light and loveliness, which you now see, in parts that once made no impression upon you? Why not number and review every part, which you have found experimentally true and sweet? Do mark in the *margin* of your closet or family Bible, every passage which the Spirit has ever shone upon. You will thus increase your own evidences of having been led by the Spirit; and confirm your confidence in his teaching; and meet His love to yourself by more ardent love to Him than you have yet cultivated. And all this, He would soon and amply repay, by witnessing to and sealing his own work on your soul.

## No. XII.

### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT AS A COMFORTER.

WHEN the Saviour promised to send the Spirit as a Comforter, he called him, "another Comforter;" not a *different* one to what he himself had been. It is by overlooking this fact, or by not considering what kind of a comforter the Saviour himself was whilst in the world, that so many of the serious and the suffering are uncomfortable. They look for more, or for another kind of comfort, than was promised; and, not finding it, they are disappointed, and thus tempted to reckon the consolations of the Spirit "few or small." This is a sad mistake! The Spirit is always, in the case of all believers, just such a comforter as Christ himself was, when he comforted his disciples.

Look at this fact. What kind of a Comforter was the Saviour to his friends, whilst he remained with them on earth? Not a "miserable" comforter, certainly: but still, as cautious as He was



kind; as prudent as He was tender. He comforted his disciples, just as he taught them:—as they could bear it, and not always as they wished for it. Accordingly, when they would have called down “fire from heaven,” to punish their enemies, He not only refused their wish, but also reproved their spirit thus, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” Luke ix. 55. In like manner, when they gave way to an ambitious spirit, and strove which of them should be greatest in His kingdom, Jesus rebuked them both by words and significant actions. All this, and much more, He did and said, whenever they fell into wrong tempers or habits. But, was He not their Comforter, notwithstanding all the reproofs and warnings he thus gave them from time to time? They themselves felt that He was so, in the best sense: a Comforter, who neither spoiled them by indulgence, nor disappointed them by caprice. Peter, no doubt, felt very uncomfortable at first, when Christ said to him, “Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things which be of God;” and equally so, when told that he would deny his Lord. The mother of Zebedee’s children, and her two sons also, thought it any thing but comforting them, when Jesus refused to maternal solicitude, the right and left hand seats in his

kingdom. Martha, too, found Him any thing but the kind of comforter she wished and expected, when she was absorbed, beyond all reason and necessity, with worldly things. But still, none of these chastised children, thought His consolations few or small, upon the whole. Accordingly, "sorrow filled" all their hearts, when Jesus began to explain to them his approaching return to heaven. The sad prospect of losing His endeared company even for a time, soon revealed to them, what a Comforter he had always been !

Now it was whilst they thus remembered, and appreciated, and felt, both the *kind* and the degree of the comfort they had enjoyed for years, that He promised the Spirit as "another Comforter," or just *such* another friend as he himself had been ; a very present help in all real trouble ; a very gentle reprover of all imaginary fears ; and a very faithful monitor against whatever was sinful in conduct or temper. You thus see, that they could not mistake His meaning. It must have been as obvious to them, from their own experience of His comforts, as his promise of "Peace" was to them, when he qualified the words, "Peace I leave with you," by the additional clause, "My peace give I unto you : let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." This timely appeal to his *own* peace, was

intended to prevent all visionary dreams of earthly ease. The disciples knew well what His peace had been! Not peace arising from the absence of trials or temptations; but peace under them, and notwithstanding them all. And equally well did they know what kind of a Comforter the Saviour had been: and thus they were prepared to look only for similar comfort, when the Spirit was given.

You now see at a glance, that Peter would not expect the Holy Ghost to comfort him, when he gave way to his fiery and rash temper; nor Martha, when she cumbered herself unduly with bustle; nor James and John, if they became ambitious again; nor any of them expect the cheering and sealing comforts of the Spirit, apart from walking in the Spirit. In a word, they would all lay their account, with finding the Holy Spirit of God just such a Comforter, as they had found, by experience, the Holy Son of God to be; full of grace and truth; but abounding in all “wisdom and prudence,” in the communication of both.

You see the bearing of these facts, as arguments, upon ourselves. You will think twice now, before you speak once again, about not being comforted by the Spirit, as you wished and expected. We have had less comfort than we looked

for, no doubt: but the question is, would the Saviour, had he been present, have given us any more, under the *same* circumstances? It is very easy to say, and it is only too true, that our joy has not been full, nor our peace lasting, nor even our hope steady: but is it not equally true, that the Saviour himself would have left our comfort just at this low ebb, had we treated him as we have dealt by the Holy Spirit?

We are fast—you see! Nor can we extricate ourselves from the grasp of this general principle, by picturing to ourselves how differently we should have acted in every thing, had the Saviour been on earth, ever since we professed to be his friends and followers. Such fancies are mere fictions. We have no reason to suppose, that we should have acted a whit better than his first disciples did. The probability is, that we should have fallen oftener than Peter, and aspired more than John, and bustled more than Martha.

The wonder is, you see, that we have had any comfort from the Holy Ghost; and not that we have had so little: for it is no more a part of His office, than it was of the Saviour's practice, to comfort at all hazards, or in spite of all circumstances. I mean, that the Holy Spirit will not wink at sin, nor connive at sloth, nor humour

caprice, nor overlook worldly-mindedness. It is His great object to *cure* these faults; and, therefore, He must correct us for them, instead of consoling us under them. And this is true kindness, as well as real prudence! For, only think for a moment, what imprudent ministers—yea, what “almost Christians,” the disciples would have been, had Christ always smiled upon them, or even been silent, when they acted inconsistently! They were not very steady nor discreet, until the day of Pentecost, notwithstanding all the checks and warnings which they got: and, had they got none, they would either have been unfit for apostleship, or they would have had to “tarry at Jerusalem” much longer than they did, before “power from on high” had descended upon them.

In like manner, it would be any thing but good for us—it would be very bad for us,—were the Holy Spirit to consult nothing but what we call “our comfort.” We mean by that, happiness in prayer; times of refreshing at the sacrament; foretastes of heaven in the sanctuary, and the prevalence of a good hope through grace at home: but, if we could make sure of all this comfort, by merely going to the closet and the sanctuary; and independent of our conduct and spirit during the week, we should soon be more inconsistent than

we are, and eventually have as little relish for the consolations of religion, as we have now for some of its self-denying duties and sacrifices.

The historical facts we have thus reviewed, furnish us with a simple clue to both the kind and degree of comfort we may expect from the Spirit. We have now, in order to judge how He is likely to act towards us, only to ask ourselves—what would the Saviour *say* to me,—how would He *look* on me,—how would He *treat* me, were He to meet me by the way whilst I am out in the world ; or to look in upon my family when I am at home ; or to visit me when I am sick ; or to track me between the closet and the sanctuary ? We see at a glance, how Jesus would act, and speak, and look, in any and every case we can suppose ourselves to be ! We feel, instinctively, how His conduct, and manner, and aspect, would be regulated in every instance, by our general character and spirit at the time. We can, at this moment, anticipate and tell, almost to a word, what Christ would say to us, were he to take us aside, and tell us what he *thinks* of us, as well as what he feels for us. I will not follow out this hint for you. You can do that for yourself. And when you do so, you will, I am sure, say of your Saviour, “ He speaks peace to his people, but only in connexion

with the solemn charge, Let them not return unto folly!" Thus, as the Son said of himself, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also," so we may say of the Spirit, he that hath seen the Saviour, hath seen the Comforter also;—seen how He comforts, whom He comforts, and why He comforts.

This cannot but lead you into "great searchings of heart;" and these may lead you to suspect, that you would hear nothing from the lips, and see nothing in the looks of the Saviour but reproof. It would not be so, however, if the fear humble and pain your heart. "A bruised reed he will not break, nor quench the smoking flax." He would be faithful to your conscience; but he would be equally tender to your spirit, lest it should "fail before Him." He would rebuke you sharply, but he would "not leave you comfortless."

Now, just such has the love of the Spirit been to us all along. "The many waters" of our folly have modified and varied the manifestations of His love; but they have "not quenched it." He has visited our transgressions with the rod, and our iniquities with stripes; but his loving-kindness he has not taken away utterly, nor suffered His good work in us to fail entirely. It, indeed, has been carried on by Him, although we have



not always carried out its holy designs. But now, —what a motive—what a way—opens before us for increasing our comforts! What “joy in the Holy Ghost,” we may obtain by diligence and circumspection, now that we see clearly, that He will do all that the Saviour would do for our comfort! O, our joy might be full, were we only willing to make room for fulness of joy, and determined to throw aside the weights which impede its progress! for there is not a healing leaf of all the foliage, nor a ripe fruit of all the vintage of the Tree of Life, which the Heavenly Dove would not as willingly bring to our ark, and place in our hand, as the dove of the deluge did the “olive leaf” to Noah. We are not straitened in the Comforter! But He cannot do many mighty works amongst us, because of our unbelief and disobedience.

But whilst thus magnifying the comfort which might be obtained, I do not forget what is enjoyed, nor feel ashamed to submit it even to the world, as demonstration of the love of the Spirit. I know and deplore, that the sum of actual comfort is far less than it ought to be: but I know too, that the world can produce no such specimens of happiness as the church. It may taunt the church with the sadness of some penitents, and with the suspense

of others, and with the too prevalent fear of death amongst all but dying Christians ; but the saddest of all the saints would not exchange places or prospects with the happiest man of the world under the sun. Many of them are in the valley of humiliation, and not a few of them in the slough of despond, and none of them altogether free from fightings without or fears within ; but the world can neither buy nor bribe them out of the valley of tears, by the wealth or the gaiety of its high places. It is not the sad, nor the doubting, nor the timid, which move when the world, unfolding her treasures and trappings, cries from her volcanic mountain-tops, "Come up hither, and be happy." No, no ; those who dance to her piping, are those only whom the Church of Christ stands in doubt of ; and never those who suffer from the doubts and fears of a humble mind. Like the women of Galilee, at Calvary and the sepulchre, the weeping followers of Christ care least for the joy of the world ; and His rejoicing followers despise it.

Be not deceived by appearances. Christians are not so uncomfortable as they seem, nor as they say at times. They do not falsify nor pretend when they complain, "that He who should comfort them is far away from them." He is far away at the time ; but he is not altogether out of

sight, nor out of mind : for even then, they would not give up their faint hope of his return, for any or all the comforts which life, without godliness, could furnish.

Thus I challenge the world, not from where I might throw down the gauntlet of defiance—from the sunny summits and the shady munitions of the mount of Communion, nor from the Bethels, Pisgahs, and Olivets, which form “ the borders of Emmanuel’s land ;” but from the valley of Achor and Baca, where trouble and weeping abound : and even there, the universal sentiment is,

“ Were I possessor of the earth,  
And called the stars my own,  
Without Thy graces and Thyself,  
I were a wretch undone.”

You will now judge of the comfort administered by the Comforter, by remembering how many, in all ages, have thought it enough to compensate them for all they could do and suffer ; enough to reconcile them to poverty, reproach, and persecution ; and more than enough, to justify them in refusing both deliverance and rewards, when the world tried to win them from Christ.

Never forget either, when it is, that the men of the world question and despise the happiness of a Christian. It is not when they are dying, nor

when they are sick, nor when they are in adversity. Then, they feel the hollowness of earthly comfort, and complain of it, in tones and terms more bitter than any Christian employs, when he exclaims, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." "Trash!—I would give it all for a day longer to care for my soul," said a rich man whom I knew, as he pointed to coffers he could hardly count. Yes; treasure appears trash then, and the wisdom of this world folly. But the death-bed of a Christian presents no such extravagance. If he has any property, he can look at it without shame, and leave it without cursing it. It is not embittered to his family, as the price of his soul; nor, if given in charity, dreaded by the church, as a price for his salvation. Thus it is not the world's fault, if we reckon the consolations of religion "few or small." The ungodly are very faulty in caricaturing a life of piety, as dull and dismal; but they repair that fault, so far as we are concerned, by a death more dismal than the fears they once ridiculed, or more sad than the seriousness which they called melancholy.

There is another thing which ought never to be lost sight of, in judging of the love of the Spirit, as a Comforter: He comforts the church, chiefly for the sake of the world; or that she may do good

to others. This is the explanation which the Apostles gave of their abundant and abiding comfort from the Holy Ghost. It was given, Paul says, "that we might be able to comfort them who are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." 2 Cor. i. 4. And this reason is the Spirit's rule, in the case of private Christians, as well as public ministers. Accordingly, we are solemnly charged to "comfort one another, and especially the feeble-minded," 1 Thess. iv. 14,—the faint-hearted, or dispirited. These must not be neglected when they fall in our way, nor when we can find access to them, if we ourselves would be comfortable. The current maxim, that "We have enough to do, to take care of ourselves, without attending to the case of others," is both false, and fearfully true! They *have* enough to do, and not a little to suffer—who live only for themselves, however circumspectly they live: for even circumspection will not secure the joy of the Holy Ghost, without sympathy and zeal of some kind. All Christians cannot, indeed, do the same work in the world or the church; but all can show the same goodness to both, in some way. "I could not comfort my pious people," said the great and good Andrew Fuller, "however or whatever I preached to them, until they began

to care for the souls of the perishing heathen." And now, even that is not enough, to secure the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, as an abiding Comforter. Perishing souls at home as well as abroad, must be pitied, and prayed for, and watched over, if we would have our own souls filled with joy or peace in the Holy Ghost. No wonder! He has a world to convince of sin; a world to convince of righteousness; a world to convince of judgment: and He will only do this by the instrumentality of those whom he has made wise unto salvation. But then, what comfort there might be in all the churches, were they to fall in, heart and hand, with this magnificent mission of the Spirit to the world! There would soon be none of the harps of Zion upon the willows of Babylon, were Zion determined to lengthen her cords to the ends of the earth, and to strengthen her stakes amongst the dwellings of the poor at home. In reference to the neglect of this, as well of other duties, the Spirit saith to the churches, "O, that my people had hearkened unto me: I would have fed them with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock would I have satisfied them." Psa. lxxxi. 16. Yes; the chief reason why He does not give us more of "the hidden manna" to eat, and why He withholds the "white

stone" of adoption so often, is, that we are not doing the first works of the first churches, upon a scale equal to our ability and opportunities.

This imperfect Essay would be worse than incomplete, were I not to remind you, that when the "time of need" is peculiar and pressing, then the helping grace of the Spirit is both rich and free grace. At no time are we sent on a warfare at our own charges: and whenever we are sent to endure a great fight of affliction, the Comforter gives rewards as well as wages. This, as I have already hinted at the close of the chapter on Sanctification, would be a perfect mystery to me—viewing, as I do, almost all afflictions as chastisement for sin, as well as trials of faith—did I not see how Christ is glorified by it. But the eyes of our neighbours, as well as of our families, are upon us, when the mighty hand of God thrusts us into the furnace; and, therefore, the Spirit takes care to sit as a Comforter as well as a Refiner, that those who judge of the worth of piety by its influence in the day of calamity, may see how a Christian can suffer without murmuring, or die without fear. For it was not chiefly on our own account, that we were so wonderfully supported, at times we can never forget. It answered our purpose, quite as well as if all the mercy of the comfort had ter-



minated upon ourselves; but like the recovery of Epaphroditus, which was mercy to Paul as well as to himself, our comfort and composure under severe afflictions, were sent to teach others, as well as to help us in time of need. How this fact exalts and endears to a Christian, the memory of his "songs in the night" of calamity! He was enabled to sing the Lord's song then, that his family and friends might learn it!

If this Essay at all place the comforts of the Spirit in a more scriptural light, than you have thought of them, you will do well to review the facts of it again, in connexion with the Saviour's own account of himself, whilst He was the Comforter of his disciples. Now he summed up the results of the office, as he himself discharged it, in his last prayer, thus,—“Whilst I was with them in the world, I *kept them*.” John xvii. 12. Thus He was a keeping Comforter. And that, the Holy Spirit is emphatically! He comforts, so as to keep us. And, in a world like this, and with such hearts as ours, and whilst all the powers of hell unite with both to seduce and ensnare, what a comfort it is to be kept from apostacy and ruin! We do not know the world, nor ourselves well, if keeping grace be not as dear to us as converting grace. Why; if we were not kept from

falling into error, and from going back to the world, and from taking up with the pleasures of sin, we should soon despise the pleasures of religion, and be both unfit and unwilling to be comforted by "any consolation" which is in Christ Jesus. I do not think lightly of comfort. I know how much it is wanted, under trials and temptations. But I know, also, of something which is more wanted than strong consolation, now that strong opposition to piety is not backed by civil power, nor cheered on by popular hostility.

In a word; I shall be well pleased, and eternally thankful, to have had a *keeping* Comforter, whilst passing through a world, which is not more emphatically "a valley of tears," than it is a vortex of temptations and snares. Comfort, indeed! if I had always been comforted, in my sense of the word, I should have made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, years ago. The Holy Spirit loves us too well, to cheer or soothe us, when wrong tempers or habits are gaining an ascendancy over us. The prodigal's father did not go into the festive halls nor the swine-fields of the "far country," where his foolish son had wandered. He did what was far better for him, welcome him home again, when he came to his senses. Just so, the Holy Spirit acts, in comforting: he keeps

back the ring, and the robe, and the shoes, and the fatted calf, until his prodigals are within sight of the paternal roof again. Be it, therefore, your concern and mine to be kept from apostacy and wandering; and we shall never be left comfortless. The comfort of being kept through faith unto salvation, will be comfort whilst

“Immortality endures.”

“I *was* kept whilst in the world,” will be as delightful a reflection in heaven, as the anticipation, “I shall be kept for ever pure and happy.”

## No. XIII.

### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT, A PLEA FOR ZEAL.

WHENEVER the claims of the Heathen, or of the dark places of the earth at Home, are to be publicly and specially pleaded in the pulpit, or on the platform, we expect to hear powerful appeals to the love of Christ, as the all-constraining motive to zeal and liberality. A Missionary sermon, of which the love of Christ was not both the foundation and the top-stone, would surprise us, as well as grieve us. Yes; next to our indignation, would be our astonishment, if that mighty motive were not mightily employed, whenever the friends of Christ are called on to spread or sustain the Gospel. We should say, and justly too, that the man who could advocate missions without shielding and enshrining their claims with the glories of redeeming love, had read his Bible to little purpose, and knew nothing of the high-way to the hearts of Christians. Were he a very Apollos in

eloquence, we should not hesitate to tell him, that the poorest Aquila or Priscilla of the Churches could teach him "the way of the Lord more perfectly."

This recognition of the love of Christ, as the grand motive for loving the souls of those who are perishing for lack of knowledge, is one of the happiest signs of our times, and one of the healthiest symptoms of the Christian Church. Whilst this is the spirit of the Church, the world will not be neglected by her. Its dark places will be noticed, and numbered, and prayed for, and helped, just in proportion as this fine spirit prevails. For, happily, the love of Christ, like the blood of Christ,

" Will never lose its power,  
Till all the ransomed church of God  
Are saved, to sin no more !"

Did it ever occur to you, however, that we do not ply nor employ this argument exactly as Paul did, when he besought the Churches to labour and pray, that the Gospel might have free course, and be glorified at Home and Abroad? He pleaded with them by the love of the Spirit, as well as by the love of Christ. This is not common now. Why, then, are we neither offended nor surprised, although we hear nothing about the Spirit, but

just that His influences are absolutely necessary, and His grace all-sufficient, to crown the Gospel with success?

This is certainly much. And then, it is all to the point. Indeed, without this full recognition of the power of the Spirit, and of the entire and universal dependance of all means upon His blessing, even the love of Christ, however preached, would be preached in vain, both to the Church and the world. It would neither win the souls of the perishing, nor constrain the zeal of the redeemed. But still, why should not the love, as well as the power of the Spirit, be appealed to, whenever appeals are made to us on behalf of missions and religious education? It is neither wise nor fair, to confine our attention to the need or the nature of His sacred influences, whilst His own moral nature—or essence—or heart—which is Love, just as God is love, and as Christ is love—is not kept before us. We are thus tempted to look with less confidence and complacency on the office of the Holy Spirit, than on the offices of the Father and the Son. Accordingly, his agency is chiefly spoken of, rather as power we cannot do without, than as Love which may be depended and calculated upon. For once that His *heart* is set before us, quivering with tender sympathy, and glowing

with intense love, and thrilling with strong solicitude for souls, we are reminded ten times of His *hand*, without which "Paul might plant, and Apollos water" in vain.

Now, this is not fair. Not, however, that there is too much said of the power of the Spirit, nor that the indispensable necessity of its operation is too often or too strongly affirmed; but that too little is said of His love, and that little too seldom repeated. The consequence is, that the general feeling of the churches towards the Spirit of all Grace is not a *generous* one. I mean, it is rather a solemn than a sweet feeling, and breathes more of awe than of expectation, and approaches nearer to submission than to complacency or gratitude. We do not, indeed, think Him an adverse or indifferent party to the success of the Gospel in the world. All our hope of its success hinges upon His good-will and great power. We look for no "increase," apart from His blessing. But still, who speaks, or thinks, or feels, concerning the Spirit's love to the world, as of the love of God and the Lamb? Who kindles with rapture, or even with a hope full of holy zeal, when the Comforter's relation and love to the world, as well as to the church, are hinted at? For, in general, they are rather hinted at than exhibited. And



yet, "the world" has the same place in the heart and mission of the Spirit, as in the work of Christ, or in the love of God. It is just as expressly said in Scripture, that the Comforter shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, (John xvi. 8,) as it is said that God so loved the world as to give his Son to be the Saviour of the world, or that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the world. Accordingly, whenever Paul wanted to carry out or to carry on any great evangelizing measure in the world, he brought the love of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Spirit, to bear together at once on the churches. He did not confine himself to the love of Christ, when intent upon calling forth love to the poor and the perishing, from the hearts and hands of those who loved Christ. No! mark how he pleaded with the Romans: "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers for me." Rom. xv. 30. He had just preached the Gospel fully, from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, in all places "where Christ had not been named," and was now about to "take a journey into Spain," for the same purpose; and therefore he craved the prayers of the church at Rome, that his missions might be

prosperous. He also "trusted to be brought on his way" by that church, to his intended Spanish mission, as well as to see them by the way. Thus he wanted both the prayers and the help of the Romans, to enable him, as a debtor to the Jews and the Gentiles, to act out his commission as an ambassador of Christ to the world; and therefore he besought them at once, for Christ's sake, and for the Spirit's sake, to work and pray for him.

In like manner, when Paul wanted the zealous and benevolent Philippians to be more than ever they had been "the lights of the world," and the landmarks of their own "crooked and perverse nation," he pleaded with them thus: "If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any fellowship of the Spirit, let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The apostle wanted them to hold forth the word of life, as well as to uphold it amongst themselves; to look upon the things of others, as well as look to their own interests; and to do both with much of the Saviour's impartiality, even if, in doing as he did, they should suffer both pain and loss. This was a great demand upon their time, and property, and patience, and impartiality; and because Paul felt it to be so, he placed it between the double blaze of the love of Christ and the love of the Spirit,

that thus the compassion of the Philippians for their own nation, and all nations, might be equal to their ability and opportunities. Phil. ii. 1.

In like manner, when Paul wanted the Ephesians to be "filled with all the fulness of God," (or, as the Saviour expressed the same state of mind, "merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful,") he not only brought before them the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths, of the love of Christ, but also the witness, seal, and earnest of the Holy Spirit of promise, urging them to maintain the unity and extend the boundaries of the church, by the plea, "There is one Spirit," therefore, "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of Redemption." Eph. iv. 15, 30.

In like manner, Paul winds up his congratulations and counsels to the Thessalonians thus—"Quench not the Spirit." He had begun his Epistle by reminding them, that they had received the Gospel "with joy of the Holy Ghost," and had proved this by making it sound out through Macedonia and Achaia; and, that neither their own joy might be lost, nor their zeal decline, he closes his Epistle by guarding them against quenching that holy flame which the love of the Spirit had kindled on the altar of their hearts as

individuals, and on the altar of their fellowship as a church.

Such, then, are the revealed facts on this subject. What is the fair inference from them? Surely, that we ought to resign our minds to the constraining influence of the love of the Spirit, as well as to that of the love of Christ, whenever we weigh the claims of a perishing world, or co-operate for the spread of the Gospel. Indeed, without a due regard to the love of the Spirit, there will not be much yielding to the influence of the love of Christ. I would, therefore, urge the one motive, were it only to give force to the other; and inculcate the one duty, were it only for the sake of the other: for nothing has such a tendency to exalt and endear the love of the Saviour, and thus to throw open our hearts to its sweet constraint, as a proper sense of the love of the Comforter. It is the latter that reveals and applies the former: for, who see unscaleable heights, or unfathomable depths, or immeasurable lengths and breadths, in the love of Christ, or feel that it passeth knowledge, but those whose eyes have been opened and enlightened by the Holy Spirit? Who comprehend, "with all saints," how the love of Christ passeth knowledge, but those who have been "strengthened with might, by the Spirit, in the

inner man?" And this is equally true of the love of God. Wherever it is "shed abroad in the heart," it is by the Holy Ghost. Rom. v. 5. In like manner, all our love to both God and the Lamb "is the fruit of the Spirit." Gal. v. 22.

It is impossible to weigh these facts, without feeling that it is equally desirable and necessary to give the love of the Spirit that place in our creed and confidence which it has in the word of God. But the question is, how can this be best done? For, now that we see how little his love has been noticed, there is some danger of running to the opposite extreme. We must guard against this with great care. We must never forget that it is the love of God, and the love of Christ, and not the love of the Spirit, which is chiefly exhibited in the Gospel. Indeed, the promise of the Spirit is itself a part of the Gospel, and his love the seal of Their love: accordingly, it is never dwelt upon by the apostles, either so long or so often as the love of God and the Lamb. It is always implied, in all that is said of the reign of Grace, and occasionally appealed to with great point and pathos; but it is never argued nor celebrated with the fulness or force with which Paul emblazons the love of Christ, and John the love of God. Still, the New Testament is full of it. Like

the principle of gravitation in nature, the love of the Spirit pervades every thing in grace. It does not blaze with the effulgence of the Saviour's love, nor shine with the brightness of the Father's love; but it is the steady daylight and moonlight of the Church, by which she both walks and works, and without which she could do nothing for herself or the world. Let us, therefore, examine its bearings upon our duty, in reference to the spread of the Gospel at home and abroad.

Now, our first duty (and all Christians, without exception, can discharge it) is, fervent prayer for the spread of the Gospel. I say fervent, and I might add *special*: for a mere passing or general petition, at the close of our ordinary prayers, is not at all like what is commanded by Christ, and implored by the apostles. The Saviour added to the command, "Say, Thy kingdom come," the equally authoritative command, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." Matt. ix. 38. In like manner, it was not for vague or general prayers that the apostles called when they appealed to the churches; but for definite and agonizing prayer on behalf of specified individuals. This was Paul's own entreaty to the Romans for himself: "I be-

seech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye *agonize* together with me in your prayers for me." Thus, also, he besought the Ephesians: "And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." Eph. vi. 19. Thus, also, he besought the Thessalonians, on behalf of himself and all his fellow-labourers, "Brethren, pray for us." 1 Thess. v. 25.

These commands and requests are not fairly met, by an occasional or general petition for the spread of the Gospel. Its ministers and missionaries should be named in our prayers. Our own minister and our own missionaries should have their names engraven upon our breastplate of intercession. And for this obvious reason: prayer will not be agonizing nor fervent, until it is personal. It is not so for ourselves, until it fix upon some specific want, or woe, or danger, and concentrate itself upon the precise help we need.

But, who pray for their minister, or for missionaries, thus distinctly—earnestly? Who agonize with either, in prayer for them, that they may be faithful or successful? Again I say, that a general reference to the ministry as a body, in prayer, is



mere compliment, not supplication. It might be as well omitted altogether, as despatched thus summarily and vaguely.

I should be somewhat afraid to write thus freely, were I not pleading by the love of the Spirit, as well as by the love of Christ. Such prayer is so uncommon, that its advocate needs an uncommon plea. And, happily, I have one on this occasion. You know well, how much the success of prayer for yourself depends upon the Holy Spirit. You cannot even pray as you ought, nor for what is according to the will of God, unless He help your infirmities. Were He to depart from you, either as a Spirit of grace or of supplication, you would soon depart entirely from the throne of grace, and become prayerless. You, therefore, cannot afford to say with the slothful or the heartless, "I have enough to do in praying for myself, without taking up the case of others specially." It would be infatuation as well as effrontery, in you, to go on with only a passing reference to your minister, or to the heralds of the cross, now that you see that agonizing prayer for them is what the Spirit demands from the churches, and enforces by his own love, as well as by the love of Christ. Whilst you overlooked these facts, your ignorance might be some excuse for your neglect: but now you

are without excuse. You must peril both the success and the perseverance of your prayers for your own safety, if you dare again to make that last and least in them which God has put first,—that his word may have free course and be glorified.

Again, I say, you cannot afford to confine your prayers to yourself; because you cannot go on, nor keep up in the divine life, without the help of the Holy Spirit. He has now taught you a new lesson, by leading you into an old truth which many overlook; but which you can never forget, whilst you remember the love of the Spirit or your own dependence upon his grace.

I bring the matter to this point, without ceremony or circumlocution, because it is of no use now, for you or me to evade the duty thus brought before us, by pretending that we have too little time, and too much in our own case to think about, in prayer, to take any lively or special interest in the case of others. Why; the less time we have, and the more pressing our own wants are, the more we are bound to bear upon our hearts the men and the means by which God is carrying on his own kingdom. We shall not fare the worse for dividing our prayers between them and ourselves. God will take care that we shall

be no losers by seeking the spiritual gain of others. We shall both pray better and more successfully, when we become intercessors as well as supplicants. Try the experiment for a week :—and see how the love of the Spirit will enable you to wrestle and prevail for yourself, when you set yourself to agonize for and with the ministers who have the glory of God at heart. Neglect it as you have done, and see how the Spirit will leave you to sealed lips, or to comfortless prayer!

Another duty, in reference to the spread of the Gospel abroad, and its efficiency at home, is liberality in the cause of Christ. I call the consecration of property to the cause of God, “liberality,” because thus it is acknowledged and commended in the word of God : otherwise I durst not have given it this name : for what have we to give, which we have not received ? True ; we may have earned what we have honestly and by hard industry, or inherited it legally and legitimately ; but who enabled us to be industrious ; who crowned honest effort with success ; who spared us to inherit ancestral or family property ? The Providence which did all or any of this for us, never gave us a discretionary power over what it committed to our trust. We are responsible stewards for whatever we possess. Every man is

as much bound to administer faithfully what God intrusts to him, as if his property were a fund for widows or orphans. I mean, that it is no more at his option to hoard the surplus beyond what his own wants require, than to encroach on the capital of a WILL beyond what the execution of it requires. Hence David thanked God both for the ability and inclination to offer freely to the temple; and then added, "Of thine own have we given thee."

This is a hard saying, which will not be borne by any one who does not understand and appreciate the love of the Spirit, as well as the love of Christ. All such will, like Ananias and Sapphira, venture to "lie unto the Holy Ghost," by giving no more than what will just appear to man enough to sustain their reputation, when they are compared with others apparently in the same circumstances.

This is a subject I would not touch, were not my chief object to warn you against lying to the Holy Ghost. It is fearfully common to join in singing hymns, which pledge the soul to give up every thing to the claims of Christ. Now, this is either mockery or perjury: for no man does sell or forsake all for the sake of Christ and the Gospel. It is not very certain that it is any man's duty to do so, now that the church is large enough

to evangelize the world, if she were as liberal as she could well afford to be. It is, however, (although not the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost,) a sin against the Spirit, to promise or profess any liberality which is not intended nor exercised. It is no jest, nor sinless matter of course, to sing,

“ Or if I might make some reserve  
And duty did not call,  
I love my Lord with zeal so great,  
That I would give him all.”

It may be cheap charity, but it is dear worship, to sing,

“ Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a gift by far too small,”

whilst far more is expended upon the luxuries of life, than upon the poor or the perishing.

O, why is this so ill managed, even by those who, on the whole, mean well? How easy it would be for any Christian to settle the question of what he can do, and then do it as unto God, without any reference to what man may think of it! You are deeply interested in this matter, whether you have much or little to spare for the cause of God: for both riches and poverty may prove equal snares; the former by estranging the

heart from God, and the latter by hardening it against him. Nothing but the grace of the Spirit can prevent this. Why, then, not deal honestly with him? Nothing is asked or expected from us beyond what Providence enables us to do: and not to do that, is to provoke the Holy Spirit to let the world drown us in perdition. Remember; when Ephraim made it an idol, God said, "Let him alone." And, what is doing less than we can, but making an idol of what we keep back?

It is of no use to quibble or equivocate: if we are not acting the part of the widow, who did "what she could" for the treasury of God, we are resisting the Holy Ghost; for one of the characteristic marks of his saving operations on the soul, is, to open the heart and the hands to the cause of Christ in the world: and if He be resisted at that point, what can be looked for, but resistance from him at all points in which our own comfort or safety is involved? He will not submit to be mocked by empty compliments, nor by selfish prayers. It is, however, mere mockery to cry,

"Come, Holy Spirit, heav'nly Dove,  
With all thy quick'ning powers;  
Come, shed abroad a Saviour's love,  
And that shall kindle ours;"

if, at the same time, we are consulting nothing but

our own interests. Never, but in obeying Christ, can we expect any such manifestation of his love from the Spirit. "If ye love me," says the Saviour—do what?—"keep my commandments." Yes: keep them, as well as pray for the Spirit: keep them, as well as ponder over the state of your own feelings.

Why is not this simple advice taken by all who are anxious to ascertain the sincerity of their love to Christ? That,

"Is a point we long to know!  
Oft it causes anxious thought:"

but whilst we do nothing but *think*, it will remain an unsettled point; because we can do no more than think. We can act, in reference to the commandments of Christ, however poor or uninfluential we may be. We can bring the reality of our love to the test, if we have nothing to give, by keeping that command, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." And if we have it in our power to aid the kingdom of Christ, either by helping to extend it, or by assisting its poor, we need neither waste our time nor perplex our minds, in sitting in judgment upon the *feeling* of love: let us test it at once, by doing all we can for the poor and



perishing. And depend upon it, if our love can make sacrifices for Christ, it is not insincere : whereas, nothing can prove its genuineness, but keeping His commandments. Love, like life, can only be demonstrated by doing or enduring.

## No. XIV.

### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT AS THE EARNEST OF HEAVEN.

THERE is, perhaps, no test of piety we are more afraid of trying ourselves by, than heavenly-mindedness ; for even when we are least earthly-minded, we are not exactly heavenly-minded, in the sense of desiring “to depart and be with Christ.” Paul’s “strait,” in choosing betwixt heaven and earth, is thus a rare strait now, except in the case of very aged or very afflicted Christians ; and even amongst them, it is not very common. Many “groan, being burdened,” in their earthly tabernacle, who do not earnestly desire “to be clothed with their house which is from heaven.” In general, the world must be desolate to us, as it was to Noah’s dove, when she found no place on all its surface, for the soles of her feet, before we say from the heart, “O, that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away to heaven, and be at rest.” For although we often

feel deeply, that this world "is not our rest," that feeling is seldom connected with longing for "the rest which remaineth for the people of God." We must be very weary indeed, before we are willing to enter into that rest. The prayer, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly," is not grown out of use altogether; but it is not *common* prayer, even amongst the prayerful. The last Enemy must come very close indeed to our bed-side, before we intreat Jesus to come quickly. The "Amen" of that cry, is usually mingled with the death-rattle in the throat.

I do not forget, whilst unveiling this fact thus unceremoniously, that there are times, even when life is strong, and home happy, and the world not unpleasant, when most Christians would neither be afraid nor very unwilling to exchange worlds. Very few are utter strangers to moments of spiritual delight, concerning which they can say with truth and soberness, "I could have taken an eternity of that delightful season." But these sweet

"Moments rich in blessing,"

are in general, but momentary. The flame of the sacrifice must be as strong as it is bright, before the soul, like Manoah's angel, can spread its wings in the blaze, to ascend up to heaven at once.

This does occur, however, occasionally, both in the closet and the sanctuary. And, whenever it

does so, it is fully and gratefully ascribed to the "Spirit of grace and supplication." Then we do mean and feel what we say,—that the Spirit has, indeed "helped our infirmities." This, we do not hesitate to consider and call,—“the Communion of the Holy Ghost.”

I thus notice and point out distinctly, both the ordinary level at which our love of heaven rests, and the extraordinary height it can be raised to occasionally and for a moment; just that we may see clearly, what the Holy Spirit has to do, in order to produce any heavenly-mindedness in our earthly hearts; and what He can do, in carrying our thoughts within the veil, and setting our affections on things above. In both cases, He does that for us, which nothing but strong love would undertake, and nothing but great power could accomplish.

Let me still more frankly explain to you my object in these familiar hints. I am very much dissatisfied with the forgetful and reluctant tone of my own mind, in regard to heaven. I have tried not a few experiments, in order to acquire a keener relish for "the glory to be revealed," and a more settled habit of looking at the "things which are unseen and eternal." It was, indeed, for this express purpose, in my own case, that I

wrote my "Eternity realized." I called it "A Guide to the Thoughtful," and thousands in Europe and America, have received it as such : but it was written to check my own *thoughtlessness*, on this absorbing subject. I find, however, that a charm, as well as a check, is wanted, in order to keep up any thing like heavenly-mindedness. And yet, the checks upon the neglect of it, which are furnished by the word of God, are very solemn ! One of them is to me, very touching and powerful : and you will never forget it, if you will only weigh it once. I refer to the reasons which Paul assigns to the Hebrews, when explaining to them,—why God was "not ashamed to be called" the God of the patriarchs. "They desired a heavenly country ; wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God." Heb. xi. 16. Thus the Apostle plainly intimates, that God would have been ashamed "to be called their God," if the Patriarchs had been ashamed to confess "that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth ;" or ashamed to avow before the world, that they desired "a better country." But they were not ashamed to do so. They said and did things which "declared plainly," both that this world "was not their rest," and "that they sought a city which God had "prepared for them."

What a flood of explaining and humiliating light, this one fact throws upon our experience ! How often we have both wondered and wept, because we found so much difficulty in calling or considering God, as “our God !” How often have you and I said, “If God were, indeed, my God, in Covenant, or in Christ, would he not manifest Himself to me as such, or as he does not manifest Himself unto the world ?”

“When I can say, my God is mine,  
When I can feel his glories shine,  
I tread the world beneath my feet,  
With all that earth calls good or great :”

—but how seldom, and how slightly this occurs !”

You see one great reason of this now. You have not only been ashamed to avow before the world your desire for a heavenly country ; but you have been very slow of heart to cherish that desire ; and, therefore, God has very properly been ashamed to reveal himself to you, as your God in Christ. For how could He be otherwise ? Consider this. How can the Heavenly Father manifest himself with propriety, as *our* Father, whilst there is little or nothing heavenly in our spirit or conversation ? If our “Father’s house”

is hardly ever thought of, except as a far off and final refuge from hell, how can our Father's heart take much interest in our comfort ?

I will not strain this point, nor turn it too sharply against you. Like myself, you may have found much difficulty, even when trying to set your thoughts and affections on heavenly things. You may have deemed it useless, if not presumptuous also, to meditate on Heaven, whilst you could hardly see how you could obtain either a title or meetness for that glorious inheritance. Well ; if you would really be glad to think often of heaven, could you only see your own warrant and welcome to hope for it, remember, that the Holy Spirit himself is " the earnest of the inheritance," even when his comforts are not exactly foretastes of heaven.

I did not make this distinction, in the Essay on the love of the Spirit in sealing believers. There I wrote just as we usually talk and think on the subject, when we are not absorbed with it. But, now that we are much ashamed and not a little afraid, because of our want of heavenly-mindedness, I must be explicit, and say at once, that the Spirit himself, and not his comforts, is the earnest of the inheritance. Dr. Owen has drawn this distinction, with his usual precision



and prudence : “ So much as we have of the Spirit, so much have we of Heaven in present enjoyment, and so much evidence of its future fullness. He is in all respects, completely an earnest. For that a thing be an earnest, it is required that it be a part of the whole, of the same kind and nature as the whole ; and, that it be a confirmation of a promise and appointment :—first, the whole is promised ; then, the earnest is given for the good and true performance of that promise. God gives us the promise of eternal life. To confirm this, He giveth to us his Spirit,—which is as the first part of the promise, to secure us of the whole. It is the Spirit himself *personally* considered, that is said to be the earnest.”—*Owen on Communion with the Holy Ghost.*

It is by overlooking this simple fact, that so many of the timid and tempted are afraid to look at heaven, as their own home. It is not the Spirit himself, but “ strong consolation,” which they reckon the earnest : whereas, He himself is so, whether comforting or humbling, whether cheering or checking us. As Owen says, “ so much as we have of the Spirit, so much have we of heaven.” That great and good man knew his Bible too well to say,—so much as we have of comfort, so much have we of heaven. He knew

also, that meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, is as truly going on in the soul, when the Spirit is carrying on our humility, or our penitence, or our sense of dependence, or even our sense of utter weakness and unworthiness, as when He is carrying us "out of the body," by an abundance of revelations; or within the veil, as upon eagle's wings. It is not, indeed, so easy to regard the Spirit as the earnest of heaven, when he is thus, as it were, burying us in the dust of self-abasement, or leading us through fires and waters of conflict, as when he is witnessing to our adoption, or ministering to our comfort: but even then, He is leading us to the "wealthy place;" for these emptyings, and straits, and struggles, are as really preparations for the rest and rapture of glory, as the peace or the joys which are the foretastes of heaven. We have, therefore, the earnest already, just in proportion as we have the Spirit himself leading and sanctifying us. The good work He is carrying on in us, warrants us to carry out our thoughts and hopes, to "glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life:" for our spiritual discernment, is heavenly light; our spiritual desires, heavenly taste; our spiritual character, heavenly purity; just in proportion as we judge, and feel, and act, above earthly principles and motives.

It will not do, to think of heaven merely or chiefly as rapturous joy, or as perfect peace, when judging of the love of the Spirit in becoming the earnest of heaven. Heaven is worship as well as joy ; and He is the earnest of it, whenever he helps our infirmities in devotion, by enabling us to pray with the heart, or to praise with the understanding. Yes ; it is always heaven begun on earth, and going on too, whenever we get beyond formality in devotion, and somewhat into the spirit of worship. All the sabbaths, and sacraments, and seasons of prayer, which are not “ a weariness ” to us, are preludes to that perfect worship, by which the saints in glory serve God, “ day and night without weariness.” We may not call them preludes nor pledges of heaven ; but they really are so. Their remote connexion with Eternity, is not lessened by their immediate bearings upon time. Their present influence upon our character and steadfastness in this world, is, indeed, what we notice oftenest and feel most ; but they anticipate the future, as well as help at present.

In like manner, all lively interest and willing efforts for the glory of God on earth, are heaven begun on earth. Never say nor suspect, that the

Holy Spirit of promise is no earnest of the inheritance to you,—if you have ever rejoiced over the repentance of a sinner ; or ministered with delight to the wants of a dying Christian ; or gone willingly to bless little children ; or put your hand to the plough of doing good in your neighbourhood ; or had your heart warmed when good news came from a far country. All this is part of the bliss of Angels. It is more. It is “the joy of thy Lord” himself! Whilst Jesus was going about “doing good” on earth, he hardly felt himself to be *out* of heaven. Hence He called himself, “the Son of man, who is in heaven.” And there is nothing more heavenly in Paradise itself, than a deep interest in the glory of God on earth.

Tell me not, therefore, and let no one tell you, that the Spirit is not much the earnest of heaven now. Tell those who say this, that He was never so much the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, since the apostolic ages, as now. It is not the heaven of their Bibles, they are thinking of, who cannot see in the church, the hope of glory, now that the habits and aims of the glorified are so prevalent in the church. All her relations to the poor and the perishing throughout the world, whether by sympathy or zeal, by good-will or by

enterprize, are identifying relations with all around the Eternal throne, and even with the Godhead upon the throne.

The Spirit not the earnest of heaven ! Who then raised up hundreds of thousands of Sunday School teachers, who, like the Lord of glory, welcome little children to their arms and their hearts ? Who then sent out into the lanes and alleys, the garrets and cellars of our towns, the thousands who, like Him, “ stand at the door and knock,” that they be invited in to counsel and console ? The Spirit, not now making Believers “ partakers of the glory to be revealed !” Grieve Him not by this ungrateful and unjust charge : for what are our Bible and Missionary Societies, now immoveably planted at home, and immutably pledged to the world, to fill the whole earth with the glory of the Lord, but *incarnations* of the love, the benevolence, and the zeal of heaven ?

Those who cannot see in all this, any thing of heaven on earth ; or who would recognise more of it in dazzling visions and mental raptures, are more *mahometanized* than they intend or suspect. They refine, certainly, upon the Turkish Paradise, who conceive of heaven as mental pleasure only ; but they are not heavenly minded, who see no glory in rejoicing with angels over the repent-

ance of sinners ; nor in joining with " the souls under the Altar," in crying, " how long " shall Babylon stand ? nor in preparing for the consummation which shall fill the universe with the grand " Alleluia ! the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ."

I will not go on writing, as if I had always looked at heaven in this light ; nor as if I thought that this strain would fall in at once, and as a matter of course, with your habitual views of heaven. For even if you are prepared to throw your thoughts, in future, into this channel, you cannot afford to detach them from any of the common ideas of heaven, as a place of rest, and reward, and purity, and perfect felicity. These sweet and soothing views of our Father's house, are just as necessary to sustain us under trials and temptations, and in order to keep up the spirit of home piety and secret devotion, as more enlarged and practical views of heaven are, in order to inspire and regulate public duty. He is not doing nor enduring much in the personal Christian warfare, (whatever be his public bustle,) who never needs to lay a throbbing head nor an aching heart, upon the soft pillow of eternal repose.

I have no sympathy, certainly, with sleepy or

lazy notions of the "rest" of heaven; but I have no respect for the piety, which has no longings for moral perfection, or no relish for the prospect,

" There, shall we see His face,  
And never, never, sin ! "

If, therefore, I am at all teaching you a new lesson, I am not setting you to unlearn any old one. For again I say, you cannot afford to give up any of those familiar ideas of heaven, to which the soul turns when weary and heavy laden, and by which the heart is soothed and healed, when torn with care, or bleeding with sorrow. The things which are unseen and eternal were made visible to faith, that patience might counterbalance the things which are seen and temporal, when they are trying; and that watchfulness might counteract them, when they are ensnaring and flattering. Never forget this fact! But, do remember another. You have the earnest of the Spirit at home—when you live with your family as "heirs together of the grace of life;" in the circle of your pious friends, when you live and love as children of one Father; in the fellowship of the church, when your heart mingles, and your hand acts, with those who are preparing for heaven; and in the communion of the universal church, when you sustain her evan-



gelizing enterprizes, or share in her "joy of harvest," at home or abroad.

This is the kind of heaven upon earth, which is most wanted for the world, and best for the church. It answers all the purposes which the raptures of retirement did, when cells and solitudes were almost the only places in which heaven could be realized; and it does what no secret joy ever can do, add to the bliss of heaven, by adding to the number and variety of the heirs of glory.

Do, adjust your hopes and habits, as a Christian, to the state of things which the dispensation of the Spirit has brought on in the world and the Church. You cannot make nor see your way to heaven *alone*, as your fathers did. The voice of a world crying for "help," was not sounding on the four winds of the world, in their time. Bel had not bowed down, nor Nebo stooped, nor Ethiopia stretched forth her hands unto God, nor Buddh and Bramah began to totter on their thrones, nor the islands of the sea to wait and weep for Missionaries, when our fathers, as pilgrims and strangers, found the smallest and obscurest houses of God, "the very gate of heaven." Neither Grecian chapels nor Gothic cathedrals can be so now, except the glorious Gospel sound forth *from* them, as well as in them. Churches must

be the lights of the world, and the salt of the earth now, if they would find their ordinances or their fellowship, "the savour of life unto life."

In a word; the Spirit is the earnest of the *whole* inheritance of glory, and not of that part of it which falls in most with our taste. Think of this! What do we more than the world, when we think of heaven, only as a better world, where sorrow and sighing will for ever flee away, and where there will be no more death or separation? We require, indeed, to take and to keep this view of the heavenly rest; for we have both cares and sorrows which need this antidote. But we have no more right to confine the work or the witness of the Spirit to the hopes which are popular, than to confine His teaching to the truths which are most pleasing. His office as a Guide is, to "lead unto all truth;" and His work, as the earnest of heaven, is to bring down glory to the heart, in those forms which the circumstances of the world require most, and which the Church wants most. It is not, therefore,

"In secret silence of the mind,"

now, that the Church can find, most readily, her "heaven," or her "God." She must look for them in working, as well as in watching.

## No. XV.

### ON COMMENDING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE Saviour always took care to couple the assertion, "ye must be born again," with some *kind* assurance, which made the grace of the Spirit appear as free as it is necessary; and free just because necessary. Even to the woman of Samaria, He said, "If thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Thus He wooed her attention to the work of the Spirit. In like manner, He preached to Nicodemus all "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel," in connexion with the doctrine of Regeneration. Neither the ignorance nor the cavils of Nicodemus, prevented the Saviour from throwing the love of God and the glory of the Atonement, like a rainbow, around the work of the Spirit. "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whoso-

ever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life," was the "*small still voice*," which followed the thunder,—“Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” The man was told at the same time, and as often, that everlasting life was free to all who would believe on Christ for it.

Thus the Saviour dealt with *individuals*, on this solemn point. In the same way he dealt with *groups* of his stated hearers, when he taught them to pray : “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Thus the Spirit is presented as the paternal gift of God, and as more surely forthcoming in answer to prayer, than even food is to our children, when they apply to us. Now, this is the form and the spirit in which the necessity of the renewing of the Holy Ghost, should be spoken of by those who would honour Him, or bring sinners to submit to Christ. He stands in the same relation to their spiritual wants, that household bread does to the wants of our children : and that is not, certainly, a discouraging connexion ! Who would deny bread to a hungry child ? Much more will not a paternal God withhold his Spirit from them that ask him. This is

an appeal which all classes can understand, and somewhat appreciate too ; it comes home so directly to the bosom and business of both young and old, rich and poor.

And now, remember how the Saviour preached the work of the Spirit to the *multitude*. “ In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and cried with a loud voice, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. This spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive.” John vii. 37. This appeal was made to “ *any man* ” amongst all the assembled thousands of Israel, although the people had just said to Christ, “ Thou hast a devil ; ” although many of them wanted to kill him, and some of them “ sought to take him.” Neither their malignant blasphemy, nor their murderous designs, prevented him from crying, “ with a loud voice, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” This he spake of the Spirit to *them* ! To whom, then, should we speak of him in warning only ? How few cases can come before us in which it is not our first duty to point to him as standing at the fountain-head of the river of life, saying, “ Come ; whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely.” This would be imitating Christ. Whereas, to tell men of their need of the Spirit,

without showing them the fulness and freeness of his grace, is almost to contradict Christ.

It is easy to say, "Who enforces the necessity of being born again of the Spirit, without at the same time informing and assuring the unregenerate, that his redeeming grace is free grace, and certainly forthcoming in answer to prayer?" This is, indeed, happily true now, upon a large scale: but still, the improved tone of the pulpit has not improved the tone of public opinion very much yet. The delaying and the undecided still manage to remain "at ease in Zion," by excuses drawn from their want of the Spirit, or from the sovereignty of his influences. Now, although there be no mode of treating this subject which would put an end to all excuses, still the number of them might be reduced, and the character of the rest changed. An unconverted man should not have it in his power to say, or insinuate, or suspect, that he cannot help his unregeneracy. This, however, he will pretend, whilst the work of the Spirit is oftener presented to him as a work of *power* than as a work of love. Calling it even "a work of grace" will not cure him; for he understands by grace, not sovereign favour, in the scriptural sense of that expression, but *favouritism*; and, therefore, regards the Spirit rather as a mighty eagle,

sailing and alighting arbitrarily, than as a gentle dove, fond of the habitations of men, and for ever hovering around them. Take any man who is halting between two opinions, and try him upon this point, and you will find that it is not as the Dove of love, but as the Eagle of power, he is resisting the Holy Ghost. I mean, he does not think that he is standing out against a heart full of love, and a hand full of grace, to himself. He does not believe that the Spirit loves him at all. He may have some idea that the Holy Ghost has *designs* upon him in the way of alarming, humbling, and checking him ; but nothing is further from his thoughts than the idea of the Spirit designing or desiring to comfort him. The Saviour knew that this suspicion is “in man ;” and, therefore, he calls the attention of the world to “ what the Spirit saith unto the churches ;” that whoever had “ an ear to hear,” should hear for themselves both the promises and warnings addressed to the churches. This was a fine measure for commending the love of the Spirit to the world, and for securing attention to His impartiality. So much had been said to the churches in the apostolic epistles, about the care, and kindness, and tenderness of the Comforter towards them, and so little, comparatively, of the breathings or bearings of his



love to the world, that the apocalyptic epistles were added to prevent the very suspicion of partiality. Hence, whilst each of them is addressed to a specified church by Christ himself, all of them are re-addressed to the world thus, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

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